

BRILL'S STUDIES IN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

General Editor

A.J. VANDERJAGT, University of Groningen

Editorial Board

M. COLISH, Oberlin College

J.I. ISRAEL, University College, London

J.D. NORTH, University of Groningen

H.A. OBERMAN, University of Arizona, Tucson

R.H. POPKIN, Washington University, St. Louis-UCLA

VOLUME 56



BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX
AND THE SHAPE OF MONASTIC
THOUGHT
BROKEN DREAMS

BY

M.B. PRANGER



E.J. BRILL
LEIDEN · NEW YORK · KÖLN
1994

The paper in this book meets the guidelines for permanence and durability of the Committee on Production Guidelines for Book Longevity of the Council on Library Resources.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Pranger, M. B.

Bernard of Clairvaux and the shape of monastic thought : broken dreams / by M.B. Pranger.

p. cm. — (Brill's studies in intellectual history, ISSN 0920-8607 ; v. 56)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 9004100555 (alk. paper)

1. Bernard, of Clairvaux, Saint, 1090 or 91-1153. 2. Monastic and religious life—History—Middle Ages, 600-1500. I. Title.

II. Series.

BX4700.B5P73 1994

271'.1202—dc20

94-3716

CIP

Die Deutsche Bibliothek - CIP-Einheitsaufnahme

Pranger, M. B.:

Bernard of Clairvaux and the shape of monastic thought : broken dreams / by M. B. Pranger. - Leiden ; New York ; Köln : Brill, 1994

(Brill's studies in intellectual history ; Vol. 56)

ISBN 90-04-10055-5

NE: GT

ISSN 0920-8607

ISBN 90 04 10055 5

© Copyright 1994 by E.J. Brill, Leiden, The Netherlands

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission from the publisher.

*Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use is granted by E.J. Brill provided that the appropriate fees are paid directly to The Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Suite 910 Danvers MA 01923, USA.
Fees are subject to change.*

PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

To Mienieke

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	XI
Introduction	3

PART I: HISTORY

Chapter One. <i>Perdite Vixi</i> : Life as Failure	21
--	----

PART II: A WAY OF WRITING

Introduction	47
------------------------	----

Chapter Two. Literary Timidity: The Twenty-Third Sermon on the Song of Songs	51
1. Arrival and withdrawal	51
2. Reading and writing	54
3. Puppets on a string	60
4. Further retreat	74

Chapter Three. Configurations: The Treatise on the Steps of Pride and Humility	85
1. Places and images	85
2. Downhill all the way	91
3. Ascent: every man is a liar	108
4. 'The order of my descent'	115

PART III: A WAY OF LIVING

Introduction	125
------------------------	-----

Chapter Four. Love. Shadows and Fog: The Sermons on the Virgin Mary	134
--	-----

1. Introduction	134
2. The Song of Songs and love-lyric	135
3. Courtly love and religious prose	138
4. The Virgin Mary by day: the Sermons on the Praise of the Virgin Mother	145
5. The Virgin Mary by night: the Sermon on The Nativity of the blessed Virgin	150
Chapter Five. Death. A Passage to Paradise: Sermon 26 on the Song of Songs	163
1. The last of the Fathers	163
2. Narrative order and disorder	165
3. Rhetorical order and disorder	167
4. Monastic order and disorder	180
5. From dust to dust	201
PART IV: A WAY OF CELEBRATING	
Introduction	209
Chapter Six. Gems and Glitter: Suger of St. Denis and Bernard of Clairvaux on Art	215
1. Respectability and philosophy: the case of Erwin Panofsky	215
2. Wildness and precision	222
Chapter Seven. The Gems of Christmas: the Sermons on the Nativity and Abstract Art	233
1. Introduction	233
2. The text: <i>Sermones in nativitate domini</i>	234
3. The scene	244
4. The geometry of Christmas	247
5. Paradise as <i>verbum abbreviatum</i>	251
6. Christmas à la hausse	257
7. Christmas à la baisse	263
8. Scherzo	269
9. Finale	272

Chapter Eight. Resurrection	275
1. Prelude to the Resurrection in the Sermons on the Song of Songs	275
2. The tale of the angel: the Sermons on the Resurrection	293
Chapter Nine. From Resurrection to Pentecost	314
1. 'Return' she says: the mystery of change	314
2. <i>Tristes tropiques</i> : Sermon 4 on the Resurrection . . .	329
List of Abbreviations	336
Latin Appendix	337
Bibliography	370

PREFACE

Broken Dreams is about delay and digression. So is this preface. Ever since, more than twenty years ago, my former teachers and 'employers', professors C.W. Mönnich and Christine Mohrmann, whose influence on the conception of this book has been basic and permanent, introduced me to Bernard of Clairvaux, the idea of writing about this man of letters has been simmering in my mind. It has, however, taken many years to materialize. The main obstacle was—so at least I made myself believe—the way Bernard's writings resist categorisation. Any attempt to grasp the beauty of his style and thought seemed to exclude a basic wildness and incoherence underlying it, leaving the would-be interpreter *draußen vor der Tür*. Gradually it dawned on me that, rather than considering Bernard's writings as accomplished in the classical sense of the word, they should be approached as 'a work in progress'. Thus the digressive strands of his writings could be seen as running parallel to the hardly controllable events of his own life. In fact, the two appeared to be inextricably intertwined. I know of no author after Augustine and before Petrarch who has been so unashamedly personal when writing about spiritual matters. But it would be even harder to think of someone whose personal revelations have taken on so ritualized and theatrical a pattern as to become increasingly remote in the process.

It has been no easy task to design a frame in which this literary oscillation could be caught and kept alive. One possibility would have been to turn to literary criticism. Here, however, a serious problem emerged. Bernard's work cannot be compared to an 'ordinary' novel. If at all seen in modern terms, it should rather be read, along the lines of Joyce's *Ulysses* or *Finnegan's Wake*, as a self-contained universe with its own laws both practical and theoretical- as a universe that is nothing less than a performance on a grand scale of musical sounds and linguistic games.

In order to bring out as many textual layers as possible, I decided to concentrate on a small number of texts and to follow the

serpentine path of Bernard's discourse. This approach has the advantage of not having to interrupt Bernard prematurely while doing justice to the build-up of suspense so characteristic of his prose.

I would like to thank some travelling companions: Arjo Vanderjagt for being a loyal friend throughout and Willemien Otten for keeping my contemplative life as 'trivial' as possible.

Willemien, Michael Clanchy, Marcia Colish, Irene de Jong, Ineke van 't Spijker and Arjo Vanderjagt read the typescript, or parts of it, and made useful comments.

My colleague and friend Alastair Hamilton went over the manuscript, efficiently as ever, in order to check, and improve upon, the quality of my English. Bastiaan Seldenthuis very kindly provided the publisher and me with a camera ready version of the book.

Many years ago Janet Coleman and I contemplated the idea of writing on medieval memory. While I myself lingered over Bernard, Janet Coleman produced her immense *Ancient and medieval memories* (Cambridge 1991). I would wish my book to be read as an afterthought, as a *memoria memoriae* to our ambitious project, reflecting both our past conversations and our uninterrupted friendship.

Finally, I owe a vast debt of gratitude to Peter Cramer. For four summers he has been my perfect host at Wolfson College, Oxford. Ours was a conversation that moved 'progressively backwards'. Both of us finding ourselves in the process of completing a book, we talked incessantly about delay, hesitation, sadness and ways of 'falling short'. My only hope now is that the publication of our respective books will not be the end of our common quest for medieval melancholy. *Proinde is sit finis libri, sed non finis quaerendi.*

University of Amsterdam

Amsterdam, December 1993

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Je prenais pour impuissance ou indifférence ce qui était discrétion voulue, souplesse calculée, déformation expressive procurée par un coup de pouce adroit; je prenais pour barbarie, ou décadence, le raffinement suprême d'un art, parfaitement maître de ses procédés et en quête d'effets subtils. Reprocher au rhéteur Augustin "de ne pas savoir composer", c'est prétendre que Braque ou Picasso n'étaient pas capables de dessiner une guitare selon les lois de la perspective. Ces lois, ils les connaissent aussi bien que nous les connaissons; seulement elles n'ont plus pour nous la sauveur, la richesse expressive qu'elles possédaient pour les contemporains de Mantegna: nos nerfs blasés exigent des effets moins attendus, des combinaisons plus nouvelles, et qui sentent moins l'école des Beaux-Arts.¹

Henri-Irénée Marrou,

Saint Augustin et la fin de culture antique: Retractatio

In this book I propose to describe the literary reflection of the following image in the works of Bernard of Clairvaux. Entering the site of the twelfth-century Cistercian monasteries at Fontenay in Burgundy or Le Thoronet in Provence, the visitor takes in two seemingly different sets of images. On the one hand, there is the austere but massive architectural form of the buildings making up the monastic complex, with their simple geometrical proportions. On the other hand, there is the extreme, untamed wildness of the surrounding landscape. Yet it is one single image which is conveyed

¹ 'I took for incapacity or indifference what was in fact conscious discretion, calculated flexibility, expressive deformation, brought about by adroit manoeuvring. I took for barbarism or decadence what was in fact the supreme sophistication of an art which was completely in control of its own techniques and in search of subtle effects. To blame the rhetorician Augustine for "not knowing how to compose" is like saying that Braque or Picasso were not able to draw a guitar in perspective. As far as they are concerned, they knew those laws as well as we do. For us, however, those laws no longer have the same flavour and wealth of meaning as they had for the contemporaries of Mantegna. Blasé as our nerves have become, they ask for more unexpected effects, newer combinations less reminiscent of the School of Fine Arts.'

to the eye of the beholder. What, then, does he really see? Form or chaos, light or darkness, exuberant vegetation or ascetic aridity? How is the wildness contained, how is the form broken down, how do they both constitute the monastery?²

It is in such an environment—the site of Fontenay having been rather similar to that of neighbouring Clairvaux³—that Bernard of Clairvaux worked and wrote. Saying that, I do not claim a straight causal relationship between architecture and literature nor should my use of ‘literary reflection’ be so understood. Rather I propose to apply the image of the monastic site as a heuristic principle to bring out the mechanics which governed the life and language of its inhabitants in general, and of Bernard in particular. The use of ‘literary reflection’ in that context may be illustrated by a simile from the world of music. The Amsterdam Concertgebouw orchestra is so called after its hall of residence (*Concertgebouw*), famous for its excellent acoustics. Now no one would be so silly as to say that the hall’s design or, for that matter, its designer—the acoustics, by the way, being a matter of luck rather than of planning—have generated the orchestra’s sound. Yet the quality of the sound is inextricably intertwined with, and conditioned by, the shape of the hall. Similarly, I take it for a fact that places such as Clairvaux, Fontenay and Le Thoronet, were the *loci* in which the voice of Bernard has resounded. My efforts somehow to catch the sound of that voice thus take into account the operational effects of the acoustics and space on the delivery of the text.

What language, then, was being spoken inside the Cistercian monastery? What sounds could be heard in the prescribed silence observed by the monks?

In his seminal work *Exégèse médiévale* Henri de Lubac reduced twelfth-century monastic literary activity to its most simple and

² For literature about Cistercian architecture, art and the thought of Bernard of Clairvaux, see Auberger 1986, Duby 1976b, Panofsky 1979, Rudolph 1990a, Rudolph 1990b, Van der Meer 1950, Van der Meer 1965, Chauvin 1992. In Chapter Six I discuss the problem of the relationship between art and thought in more detail.

³ Auberger 1986: 103; Van der Meer 1965: 39–41; Chauvin 1992.

basic proportions by describing it as 'mystical tropology.'⁴ In contrast to the possibly infinite number of data from the *sensus litteralis* and to the even wider dimensions of allegorical meaning tropology seems to offer a clear outline of the area within which the one and the other are to be brought to life: human behaviour. This view had been elegantly expressed in general terms by Gregory the Great:

We have heard from history what to admire; we have learnt from the head what to believe; we must consider next how the body teaches us what we should do in order to live. It is in ourselves that we must transform what we have been reading.⁵

What happens in the tropology is that in the believer's mind biblical facts and data are appropriated and interiorised so as to create and recreate a world in which the mysteries of faith, lifted out of their original place in history, coincide with the mental state, or, for that matter, development of the believer. Familiar though such a strong presence of religious mysteries in the practice of (monastic) life may have been since the early days of Origen, for De Lubac there is no doubt as to the moment of its peak: the twelfth-century Cistercian world of Clairvaux. It is in the exclusive and paradisiacal society of the monastic life that word could no longer be distinguished from action, the object of faith being turned into a self-supporting subject. It is in the ideal spiritual surroundings of the monastic site that Christ found himself once more born, once more nailed on the cross and once more resurrected. In the words of Nicholas of Clairvaux:

In my Clairvaux a great number of clerics as well as noblemen engender the new man... I have poured out my soul in me

⁴ In Medieval exegesis 'tropological' is used to denote the *sensus moralis*, the moral meaning of Scripture. 'Moral' should not be understood in a narrow ethical, and much less in a moralistic sense. Rather it stands for human behaviour as a reflection of the absolute way of life as it has been revealed in sacred history culminating in the life of Christ. Cf. De Lubac 1959.

⁵ Quoted in De Lubac 1959: 555: 'Audivimus ex historia, quod miremur; cognovimus ex capite, quod credamus; consideremus nunc ex corpore, quod vivendo teneamus. In nobismetipsis namque debemus transformare quod legimus;' Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*, l. I, c. 29; Sources chrétiennes 32: 161-2.

because I will go to the place of the admirable tabernacle, the house of God. In my view that tabernacle is nothing but the house of Clairvaux, not made by the hand of men.⁶

De Lubac, for one, has given a brilliant description of literary life in the world of Clairvaux.

Entre leurs [i.e. the Cistercians monks] mains, il semblerait quelquefois que la doctrine traditionnelle se spécialise d'une expérience intérieure de plus en plus riche et subtile, mais qui n'est plus, qui ne peut plus simplement celle de l'Eglise elle-même, celle de toute la communauté, des fidèles. Culture en serre chaude, méditation ardente sur des textes liturgiques plus que sur une Bible directement étudiée, exercice aristocratique, suspension du temps à l'intérieur d'oasis spirituelles,—tandis qu'au dehors la vie, la vie du siècle, la vraie vie des hommes poursuit son cours, engendrant peu à peu une nouvelle forme d'exégèse, plus simple, plus objective, plus robuste. Fruit d'arrière-saison, peut-on croire, savoureux entre tous, mais qui ne porterait plus de promesses. Broderie mystique, analogue à cet art des cloîtres qui finit par n'exprimer plus, dit André Malraux, qu'"un sacré confidentiel."⁷

This is a fascinating picture of monastic exegesis and indeed of literature as such. The intensity of ardent meditation, the liturgical

⁶ 'In mea Clarevalle...frequens numerositas tam nobilium quam litteratorum novum hominem in novitate vitae parturiunt,' Nicholas of Clairvaux, *Epistola* 35, PL 196: 1645C; 'Effudi in me animam meam, quoniam transibo in locum tabernaculi admirabilis usque ad domum Dei. Tabernaculum, Clarevallis domum non manufactam intelligo,' PL 196: 1645C.

⁷ 'Under the hands of the Cistercian monks it looks sometimes as though traditional doctrine particularizes towards an inner experience of increasing richness and subtlety which, however, is no longer, or can no longer simply be, the experience of the Church itself, that is, of the entire community, of the faithful. A culture of the hothouse, ardent meditation on liturgical texts rather than on a Bible studied for its own sake, aristocratic pursuits, suspension of time inside a spiritual oasis,—while outside life, that is, the life of the world, real life continues its course, gradually creating a new kind of exegesis of a simpler, more objective, more robust nature. Late summer fruit, so one tends to think, delicious as the others but with no more promises for the future. Mystical embroidery, reminding one of the monastic art characterised by André Malraux as ultimately expressing but "a private sacrality".' De Lubac 1959: 582.

setting of reading biblical texts, the suspension of time in the paradise of the monastery, the structureless, almost anarchic embroidery of mystical expression, all of those elements are ingredients which might contribute to creating an *histoire littéraire* of the ideal of Cistercian-Bernardian life. That is what I intend to undertake in this book. Before embarking on such an enterprise, however, the would-be interpreter is confronted with a major historiographical obstacle. He has to account for the fact that the wildness of the Cistercian literary paradise, as described by De Lubac, has caused considerable embarrassment among historians. As a result attempts have been made to save Bernard's text from the disorderly by making him a more respectable theologian and author than De Lubac's *broderie mystique* would suggest him actually to have been.

A first such attempt is undertaken by De Lubac himself in the very text under consideration. Underlying his characterisation of Bernardian-Cistercian literature is a strong reservation, his admiration for its brilliance notwithstanding. This almost decadent, and certainly aristocratic, kind of exegesis, being the fruit of an *arrière saison*, was clearly not destined to triumph in the future nor can it be said to have been completely in accordance with the broader interests of the Church. As far as Bernard is concerned, he has been protected from further decline by being seen to fit in, or, by being made to fit in, with the general tradition of Christian thought. At the same time De Lubac has him secretly share, in anticipation, the more scholastic profits of 'a more simple, more objective and more robust exegesis'.

A quelque famille qu'ils appartiennent, l'élite de ces moines baigne toujours dans le grand courant de la tradition. Ils se souviennent toujours des fondements doctrinaux qui soutiennent leur édifice. Les plus grands d'entre eux ont une conscience très vive du mystère chrétien dans la solidité de sa structure et dans l'ampleur de son rythme. C'est ce que l'on constate dans le cas apparemment le plus spécial, la nouveauté cistercienne et l'oeuvre de saint Bernard.⁸

⁸ 'To whatever family they may belong, the elite of those monks still looks for their inspiration at the main stream of tradition. They are always mindful of the doctrinal foundations supporting their edifice. The greatest among them

This ambivalent feeling with regard to Cistercian-Bernardian exegesis on the part of De Lubac is clearly rooted in an ecclesiastical *parti pris*. However, it is also part of a broader historiographical assumption which can be seen as another attempt to pinpoint the 'incoherent' nature of the Cistercian world. The general line of that argument runs as follows. The twelfth century is considered to have been a period of cultural revival, of Renaissance, especially in *belles lettres*, theology, and philosophy. This development basically coincided with an increasing preeminence of urban schools and thought over the old, monastically dominated, world of learning. Although Bernard, admittedly, is seen as a genius and a dominant figure in his age, his ideas, and the Cistercian movement in general, must be regarded as conservative, indeed *fruits d'une arrière-saison*.⁹ Consequently, Nicholas' paradise is to be read as a *Chiffre* symbolizing refuge for those who could not cope with modernity rather than as an intrinsic part of the general progress of the century. This assumption has not only resulted in an as yet unsolved dichotomy in the appreciation of Bernard, excessive praise for his piety on the part of theologians and excessive hatred of his blindness to reason on the part of philosophers. Banishing the world of Clairvaux from twelfth-century modernity, it has also torn apart the constitutive elements of his thought and thereby obscured its extremely high degree of sophistication.

Related to Bernard's so-called lack of modernity is a third line of argument which deals with the wildness and incoherence of his style. The tendency to save Bernard's rhetorical reputation while apologizing for his lack of formal control was most poignantly expressed by Erasmus. In his view, as in that of so many others, Bernard should indeed be seen as a rhetorical phenomenon, even if his talents sprang from natural rather than acquired skills.¹⁰

are very conscious of the Christian mystery in the solidity of its structure and the breadth of its rhythm. This is particularly evident in what is clearly the most special case: the innovative Cistercians, and in the works of saint Bernard.' De Lubac 1959: 583.

⁹ See for a recent example of this view: Fichtenau 1992: 192–195.

¹⁰ 'Bernardus concionabundus est, natura magis quam arte, festivus et iucundus, nec segnus in movendis affectibus, sed apparet plerasque illius conciones apud coetum monachorum habitas, in quorum usus fere scripsit quaecunque scripsit.' *Ecclesiastes* II, *Opera omnia* V, 4; 268. See also *Enarratio Psalmi XXXVIII*, *Opera omnia* V, 3; 196: 'Quorsum nunc attinet

Although this impression of natural endowment has a firm base in Bernard's astonishing rhetorical powers and fame as a preacher inside and outside the monastery, it betrays embarrassment as well. It is as if Erasmus had entered the monastic site and was struck by the abundant vegetation of the forest without taking notice of the geometrical spirit of the buildings,—'borne upon the waters', which kept nature under control. As we shall have ample opportunity to see, the idea of Bernard having a natural rather than an acquired taste in matters of literature is shared by both humanist classicists and Bernard's religious admirers alike, the two groups, by and by, being by no means mutually exclusive. As for the religious admirers from the late Middle Ages to the present day, they have always been quite willing to forgive Bernard for his exuberance. For them his vehement religious language is first and foremost the spontaneous expression of deeply felt religious emotions.¹¹ And, indeed, it is in him that this special kind of internalized devotion,

recensere caeteros notae inferioris scriptores, Bernardum, Gersonensem, Thomam et Scotum, quum in excellentissimis ecclesiae columnis, non haec tantum, quae duntaxat exempli gratia commemoravi, sed alia multa deprehendantur?"

¹¹ See, for instance, Casey 1987: 51: 'It was chiefly the liberty inherent in the sermon which attracted Bernard; it offered him the possibility of powerfully imprinting his own personality on what he was writing. Berengar's outrage that Bernard should have interrupted his discourse with an expression of personal grief (S[ermon on the] C[anticle] 26), can be rebutted with a reminder of the sort of writing which Bernard was attempting. It offered him the opportunity of giving expression to himself in a way almost no other genre could. Thus, the sermons of Bernard are unique because he made them vehicles of his own self-expression...Bernard's art is such that his eloquence overflows the categories of standard presentation and he is able to communicate something of the fire of his own devotion.'

I do not want to suggest that Casey and, more generally, the 'school' of Jean Leclercq, neglect the rhetorical aspects of Bernard's writings. Leclercq, in particular, has done much important work in this area. What I criticize in them is a tendency prematurely to separate feelings and devotion from their rhetorical setting, identifying devotional expression with the surplus of rhetorical liberty. Consequently, a certain dichotomy emerges between devotional/emotional self-expression and literary form. In my view the literary form is an intrinsic part of 'self-expression' and 'personal emotions', the *artificialiter* of the *devote* (Cf. note 10 and Chapter Five).

to become so typical of Western Christendom, is believed to have originated. The intensity and authenticity of his spirituality, they hold, more than compensate for whatever lack of stylistic moderation may be found.

The almost 'natural', 'spontaneous' character of Bernardine religious experience raises some problems with regard to the accessibility of his works. Just as it often seems difficult to separate the historical Bernard of Clairvaux from his reputation as a saint of the Church,¹² the image of Bernard the mystic tends to absorb the articulate and literary nature of his writings. However, in the same way that Cistercian nature cannot be detached from the architectural form of the building complex, Bernard's psychology and devotion cannot be abstracted from the literary form in which they have become known to us.

Admittedly, we face a serious problem as to the form of Bernard's writings, which can be best explained by referring to Henri-Irénée Marrou's experience of the early works of Augustine. In his *St. Augustin et la fin de la culture antique* Marrou came to the conclusion that the seemingly unstructured and ever-ongoing arguments of Augustine's Cassiciacum-dialogues were really disconcerting and, in fact, suffered from a lack of compositional skill. In the *Retractatio* to his book he felt compelled to withdraw this accusation. The digressive style, the endless excursions, the random composition, all those elements belonged to a literary pattern in the service of the mind in search of God. In an endless process of *exercitatio mentis* the soul is taught, made flexible and moved in order to conform itself to the shape of the divine Word.

The reader of Bernard's work is confronted with similar 'drawbacks'. Especially in the sermons—the treatises being more clearly structured by their genre—one has to work one's way through endless, and often seemingly incoherent trains of argument. Unexpected turns, repetitions, and above all, retardation, and digressions, as well as an all-pervasive presence of biblical texts and allusions seem to be the main components of this type of discourse.

¹² Adriaan Bredero has done much to disentangle the historical and hagiographical-cultic aspects in past and present views on Bernard. See Bredero 1960, 1977, 1980, 1987–88, 1993.

In terms of our image of the monastic site, it looks as if Bernard's text reflects all of the wild vegetation and none of the architecture. It seems only weakly and loosely organised and if there are more precise principles governing this endless stream they certainly lack visibility.

Yet for Bernard, as much as for Augustine, the following adage applies: *semper devote, semper artificialiter*.¹³ It is not just the permanent use of the *colores rhetorici* which is characteristic of his writings. Even more importantly, the intrinsically artificial nature of the entire complex of his literary production—of the 'acoustics'—invites the reader to take in the wildness of the mystical embroidery and the geometrical precision of its form in one single act.

Yet, one might ask, does our image of the monastic site not reveal a serious flaw? For, if the wildness is visible and the form is not, or, at least, much less so, how does this image touch the eye of the beholder in an integrated manner? It is my contention that the effect of Bernard's language on the reader, including its digressions and retardations, can be as immediate as the effect of the monastic site on the twentieth-century, ignorant tourist. Failure to catch this immediacy is due to an expectancy on the part of the modern reader who anticipates, in the words of Marrou, seeing a Mantegna rather than a Picasso or a Braque. In fact, the failure is due to a lack of 'touristic ignorance'. This pattern of expectation is based on a sense of literary law-and-order which prevents the reader from appreciating a different *ordre du discours*, even though, or, perhaps, precisely because it is part of his own Western culture. Erasmus' 'prejudice' is quite telling in this respect. Yet, although Bernard's

¹³ Cf. Robert of Basevorn in his treatise *De forma praedicandi* (1322): 'Now about St. Bernard. It must be realized that his method is 'without method' (*modus sine modo*), exceeding the style and capability of almost all men of genius. He more than the rest stresses Scripture in all his sayings, so that scarcely one statement is his own which does not depend on an authority in the Bible or on a multitude of authorities. His procedure is always devout, always artful. He takes a certain theme or something in place of it—i.e., some matter which he intends to handle—and begins it artfully, divides it into two, three or many members, confirms it, and ends it, using every rhetorical colour so that the whole work shines with a double glow, earthly and heavenly; and this, as it seems to me, invites to devotion those who understand more feelingly, and helps more in the novel methods which we are now discussing' (translation by Murphy 1971: 131).

is a special case, from Origen and Augustine,¹⁴ through Gregory the Great,¹⁵ to the monastic literature of the twelfth century, there existed a continuous discourse of mystical tropology—that is, a discourse of reconstructing biblical texts and scenes—which alternated stylistically between endless expansion and sudden contraction. In that process the ever-expanding stream of commentary and reflection, producing a kaleidoscopic mosaic of texts and comments, could be interrupted by sudden, contracted evocations of biblical scenes through which the preacher makes his point. Such a point could be a quotation of or an allusion to a biblical text which the audience was supposed to recognise. This procedure can be compared with the *pointe* made by the entertainer who, in order to be effectively funny, needs the routine of time and circumlocution. The effect, however, is immediate. And, if professionally executed, it makes one forget the time spent on building up the climax.

Bernard's texts are indeed about forgetting and remembering. However, the failure of the modern reader to feel their immediate impact might also be due to the difference between his mental equipment and the monastic memory. But just as the twentieth-century entertainer expects his audience to have a basic knowledge of modern life, so the medieval monastic preacher was able to draw on a presence of biblical language in the minds of his audience which he could appeal to, not only in his routine commentary but also in more sophisticated moves of hints and allusions. And although in the following we will come across some spectacularly indirect allusions to biblical scenes—of which it is doubtful whether they were instantly recognisable even to the trained ear of Bernard's audience—their hiddenness is part of the 'hide and seek game' of monastic memory, of the *vita abscondita* to be brought to the surface from the dark corners of the mind, rather than betraying a lack of immediacy.¹⁶ Underlying the intensity of contracted biblical

¹⁴ See for instance Spence 1988: 55–102 and Colish 1983.

¹⁵ Gregory defends this method in his letter to Leander of Seville which is identical with the preface to the *Moralia in Iob* (Sources chrétiennes 32: 82). Paul Meyvaert talks about 'pegs' on which Gregory hangs his teaching, or, a variety of pegs or clusters (cf. Meyvaert 1977: 5).

¹⁶ In this book I concentrate on Bernard's dramatic reconstruction of biblical scenes rather than on tracing his use of biblical quotations. That is the

scenes and images in Bernard's prose is a simple logic. What would contraction be without expansion? What else can expansion return to but the contraction from which it springs? Just as in the monastic site the wilderness cannot be separated from the geometrical form of the buildings, those atomic scenes intrinsically govern the ever expanding stream of Bernard's prose.

How do we go about describing this monastic image whose impact is supposed to be direct when direct access to it as religious experience is blocked by its artificial nature? The very artificiality of Bernard's prose—by which I mean the convergence of image and structure—is the reason why I shall refrain from using theoretical concepts common in literary criticism and philosophy to describe the dynamics of his text. Of course, I do not deny the usefulness of such approaches. Recently Martha Nussbaum's reading, for instance, of Henry James' novels through the eyes of moral, Aristotelian, philosophy has produced fine results. *Love's language*, i.e. the 'philosophical' question of the linguistic articulation of love, could indeed be called the main theme of a work on Bernard of Clairvaux. And as for James, the ever expanding reflections of his imagining mind remind one somehow of Bernard's literary contemplation producing so many different 'points of view': 'finely aware and richly responsible.'¹⁷ Yet, in spite of his reputation, Bernard can be considered even more of an 'intellectual' than James. Artificiality comes to him even more naturally, offering a wealth of 'philosophical' points of connection in the text itself. Image and structure—that is, images and their framework—being so closely intertwined¹⁸ for him, a subtle approach is required. In order to

reason why, as a general rule, I do not specify the exact provenance of biblical quotations. They can be found in the edition of Leclercq. In this manner I hope somehow to imitate the monastic memory which worked by sound rather than through written references.

¹⁷ See Nussbaum 1990: 148–167: "'Finely Aware and Richly Responsible': Literature and Moral Imagination'. The phrase is taken from the preface to *The Princess Casamassima* (Nussbaum 1990: 135).

¹⁸ In that respect the opening words of Dronke's *Fabula*—dealing with more philosophically minded twelfth-century authors such as William of Conches, Bernard Silvestris and Abelard—could equally apply to Bernard: 'There is a sphere of medieval writing in which the abstract and the concrete,

bring out most effectively this aspect of the 'finely aware and richly responsible' in Bernard's construction of images, I will try to catch the dynamics of the interaction between images and structure through imitation rather than through imposing heterogeneous schemes of interpretation on the delicate fabric of his language.

So, for reasons of economy I intend to stick to the Bernardine text as closely as possible. In doing so I hope to be able to describe one single image in an unlimited variety of configurations, just as the buildings of the monastery make up one single church and one single cloister. Joining in on the protracted rhythm of Bernard's text a *figura*¹⁹ will become visible which contains and controls both

ideas and images, are inextricably conjoined.' Dronke 1974: 1. Cf. my discussion of Bernard's and Suger's 'Platonism' in Chapter Seven.

¹⁹ Erich Auerbach has given the classical definition of *figura*: 'Figural interpretation establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second encompasses or fulfils the first. The two poles of the figure are separate in time, but both, being real events or figures, are within time, within the stream of historical life. Only the understanding of the two persons or events is a spiritual act, but this spiritual act deals with concrete events whether past, present, or future, and not with concepts or abstractions; these are quite secondary, since promise and fulfilment are real historical events, which have either happened in the incarnation of the Word, or will happen in the second coming. Of course purely spiritual elements enter into the conceptions of the ultimate fulfilment, since "my kingdom is not of this world"; yet it will be a real kingdom, not an immaterial abstraction; only the *figura*, not the *natura* of this world will pass away, and the flesh will rise again. Since in figural interpretation one thing stands for another, since one thing represents and signifies the other, figural interpretation is "allegorical" in the widest sense. But it differs from most of the allegorical forms known to us by the historicity both of the sign and what it signifies' (Auerbach 1959: 53-4).

Applying this definition to monastic literature I use it in a slightly modified sense. As I will point out, celestial fulfilment is realised in the monastery without being either entirely historical or entirely spiritual. In other words, within the monastic context the concept of *figura* obtains in a very special way. Generally speaking, for instance, Christ in his incarnation is the focus of history. However, when the same Christ appears in the guise of the bridegroom from the Canticum or the prophet Elisha from the book of Kings, the relationship between the sign (the bridegroom or the prophet) and that which is signified (Christ) is not a clear-cut one. Rather than being merely a sign, the bridegroom and the prophet are a mixture of a sign and the thing signified (Christ). From a literary point of view, all that counts is their being bridegroom or prophet. Thus there is a sense in which Christ as the thing signified almost vanishes in

wild vegetation and geometrical form, movement and rest, darkness and light.

In accordance with the nature of Bernard's own discourse, my commentary will be shaped by digression, retardation and repetition. It is one and the same story that will be told over and over again. If there is any development, it is to be found in the increasing

the *figura* which, in turn, has ceased to be a mere sign. So, the monastic *figura* is to be seen as a refined version of the *figura* used to denote the general coherence of Christian history: it indicates a real but provisional fulfilment of history within a broader context of a universal, historical fulfilment which is yet to come.

It should be realised that a completely accurate definition of this phenomenon cannot be given, since the notion of 'spiritual' is inextricably intertwined with that of history. Auerbach describes this complex state of affairs as follows: 'Whereas in the modern view the event is always self-sufficient and secure, while the interpretation is fundamentally incomplete, in the figural interpretation the fact is subordinated to an interpretation which is fully secured to begin with: the event is enacted according to an ideal model which is the prototype situated in the future and thus far only promised. This model situated in the future and imitated in the figures (one is reminded of the term *imitatio veritatis*) recalls Platonic notions. It carries us still further. For every future model, though incomplete as history, is already fulfilled in God and has existed from all eternity in His providence. The figures in which he cloaked it, and the incarnation in which He revealed its meaning, are therefore prophecies of something that has always been, but which will remain veiled for men until the day when they behold the Saviour *revelata facie*, with the senses as well as in spirit. Thus the figures are not only tentative; they are also the tentative form of something eternal and timeless; they point not only to the concrete future, but also to something that always has been and always will be; they point to something which is in need of interpretation, which will indeed be fulfilled in the concrete future, but which is at all times present, fulfilled in God's providence, which knows no difference of time. This eternal thing is already figured in them, and thus they are both tentative fragmentary reality, and veiled eternal reality' (Auerbach 1959: 59–60).

From a modern point of view it is difficult to appreciate the historical nature of events which are embedded in such almost Platonic prototypes (or, is it?). Moreover, a monastic approach towards history tends to absorb 'events' in its own spiritual environment so as almost to deprive them of their historical dimensions. Yet it is precisely the use of *figura*, coloured though it is with Platonic shades, which, according to Auerbach, has contributed to a better understanding of the notion of historicity in Western literature and thought.

See also Dronke 1968: 5: 'I use the term 'figura' to suggest the equal and simultaneous reality of the figure and what is figured by it. Unlike theological allegorêsis, figura does not pluralize its 'levels' but unifies them.'

lightness of sacred history which, within mystical tropology, implies private and world history as well.

I intend to proceed as follows. Beginning with the history, the *sensus litteralis*, of Bernard's life as perceived by himself, I detect his self-portrait to bear the hallmark of the monastic *figura*. Regrettably, as he keeps pointing out, it is full of wildness and disorder. Yet the very same 'disorganised' sinner also acts the prophet who brings to light the sins of others and of himself. Next I turn to Bernard the author. Reading Sermon 23 on the Song of Songs and the Treatise on the Steps of Pride and Humility, I see him at work as a writer, positioning himself where the action is, whether it is good or bad, dark or light. He takes on the identity of the bride from the Canticle as well as of the sinful monk hurtling to perdition. Reflecting, in writing, the double movement of ascent and descent, he imitates Christ the bridegroom whose appearance and disappearance is concentrated in one single image of ascension.

In the third part life in the monastery is described in terms of love and death. The structural nature of their simultaneous presence makes life into yet another *figura* of the same monastic image: a broken dream, symbolized, in my narrative, by a comparison between the secular nocturnal lament of a bride for her vanished lover: *Foebus abierat* and the lyricism of Bernard's love-language. The disappearance of love from the monastery coincides with the invasion of death. In Sermon 26 on the Song of Songs Bernard laments over the death of his brother Gerard. In my account of that sermon I try to indicate how Bernard once more transforms the cruelty and disorder of life, including his own, into an enchanting ritual of consolation.

The fourth part describes the course of sacred history within the walls of the monastery. If the identity of the monastic *figura* has become insufficiently manifest in the preceding chapters, it here receives its final form as enacted in the rhythm of the liturgy: from Christmas to Pentecost. But even though we are now able to discern the figure of Christ as the ultimate monastic image, it is still full of wildness, expressed in the message of the angel at the empty tomb proclaiming that the Lord has left and gone to Galilee 'drawing his flock behind him'.

Finally, we return to the monastic site. After the highlights of Christian liturgy, we now observe the monk resuming his oc-

cupation of weeping and praying. For Bernard the ultimate 'mystical' expression of monastic life seems to be a return to normality. It is in the routine of his own preaching, that is, in the re-enacting of the monastic *figura*, that he repeats the same fantastic process of expansion and contraction, of delay and fulfilment, over and over again. Thus his literary activity itself can be characterised in the same way as he himself describes the bride's call in the Cantic for the return of the bridegroom: it is a *continua vox*/one protracted cry.

The priority of the rhythm of Bernard's image production over the thematic will govern my narrative. Accordingly, explicit treatment of issues such as Bernard's style, his attitude towards art, the nature of love, his theology, will take on the shape of excursions. Rather than abstracting from Bernard's language a more or less systematic set of ideas, I will test possible sets of ideas against the background of the context. That context is, in a sense, taken to the letter. If ideas do have a role to play, it is as an illustration of what is going on in the text. I hope that this fidelity to what I consider to be the Bernardine type of discourse, though perhaps somewhat obscure at first, may contribute to the main goal of my argument: to catch Bernard at work in the process of creating literature. In accordance with the nature of the monastic image, I hope this approach will have the added advantage of throwing some new light on traditional themes in Christian spirituality. The setting of the monastic site, the encapsulation of light in darkness, of abundant vegetation in form, might bring about a deeper understanding of the role of virginity in love, of aridity in emotion.

For the same reason that I concentrate on the text rather than on theory, I shall not attempt to situate Bernard in the historical context of the twelfth century. That is not to say that I want my reading of Bernard's text to be a-historical. Portraying Bernard as a 'sophisticated intellectual' I intend to give him a more integrated place in twelfth-century culture than his 'conservative' reputation has hitherto permitted.²⁰ If, occasionally, I cannot resist the temptation to digress a bit into establishing an experimental but cautious

²⁰ Gilson 1947 dealing with Bernard's 'humanism' is of seminal importance in this respect. See also Southern 1953: 219 and Kingma 1993: 35–6.

rapprochement between Bernard and Abelard,²¹ it is because I want to indicate that those two antagonists of the so-called twelfth-century Renaissance—and antagonists they were—share a certain sense of ‘falling short’.²² But far from implying tragedy, this touch of sadness should be seen as a modern version of an old tradition of *consolatio*. If Abelard’s *Historia calamitatum* is a consolatory letter, so too is Bernard’s account of his Broken Dreams.

²¹ Cf. Stock 1983: 454.

²² For excellent discussions of Abelard’s concept of failure in the production of images of the divine, see Dronke 1974: 66–7 and Cramer 1993: 221–66. After having pointed to Abelard’s traditional use of Augustinian and Dionysian notions, Dronke describes the more unusual aspects as follows: ‘What is unusual is Abelard’s emphasis on the complementary qualities of uniqueness and variety. It is necessary to have a varied range of analogies, metaphors and parabolic enigmas when attempting to give an inkling of the divine, but not merely, as in other disciplines, for the rhetorician’s reason of trying not to weary the reader. Rather, the unique object of this figurative language demands uniqueness in the language itself. Not of a kind adequate to the object—this is out of the question—but a uniqueness-in-variety. “Every attempt/Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure.” Each image is partial, it perceives and records some part or aspect of a likeness, and thus falls short in a different way from every other. Each suspicion of a taste depends on the palate of the taster. And yet this seemingly negative aspect of relativism has as its corollary that each momentary taste, each partial image, can complement every other. The variety of partial failures, each unique in the way it fails, helps to build a complex *similitudo* that conveys at least a hint of the uniqueness of its divine object.’ I do not want to deny the fundamental differences between Bernard and ‘philosophers’ such as Abelard. But they do share a view of language as a vehicle to express simultaneously uniqueness and failure, adequacy and inadequacy.

PART I
HISTORY

CHAPTER ONE

PERDITE VIXI: LIFE AS FAILURE

The main biographical facts of Bernard's life are well-known. He was born in 1090/1091 in Fontaines near Dijon and educated with the canons of Saint-Vorles in Châtillon-sur-Seine. In 1112 he became a monk in Cîteaux, together with thirty companions, mainly relatives. In 1115 he founded the monastery of Clairvaux. From this remote corner of the civilised world¹ he intervened in matters both political and ecclesiastical. In 1130 he supported Innocent II against Anacletus II and a few years later he did the same over the conflict with Arnold of Brescia. In 1145 his pupil Eugenius III was elected pope. Besides continuing to mediate in all kinds of conflicts Bernard energetically preached the second crusade. He lived to witness the latter's utter failure in 1148 and died in 1153.

During his lifetime Bernard presided over the enormous expansion of the Cistercian order. The first houses of Cîteaux—La Ferté, Pontigny, Morimond and Clairvaux—became centres from which hundreds of monasteries spread over all of Western Europe. Bernard, abbot of an obscure Cistercian settlement on the borderline of Burgundy and Champagne, travelled around, not only advising bishops and princes but also expressing his views on delicate doctrinal issues. At the council of Sens in 1140 his intervention decided the fate of Abelard and a few years later, at the council of Reims, he spoke out against Gilbert of Poitiers.²

All those activities have left their traces in Bernard's writings. Many of his letters reflect his interventions in political and ecclesiastical matters. Some of them, such as the famous *epistola* 190, formerly

¹ There is a sense in which Clairvaux can be called central, located as it was in the proximity of important commercial routes across the Champagne. Yet its being just off the main track brings out the notion of remoteness more clearly.

² For a general introduction to the life and work of Bernard, see Evans 1983.

known as *De erroribus Abaelardi*, have developed into treatises on the doctrinal issues under consideration. On the other hand, there are treatises like the *Apologia* which seem to have originated in historical controversies. On the face of it the *Apologia* is a bitter attack on the wealth of Cîteaux's rival, Cluny, or, as modern research has it, on traditional monasticism in general.³ Of course, there is another side to Bernard's oeuvre. Works of a more serene and contemplative nature are not lacking. There are the *Sermones per annum*, sermons about liturgical themes of which the Christmas Sermons and the Sermons on the Virgin Mary stand out as highlights. Further, there is Bernard's *magnum opus*, the Sermons on the Song of Songs. This is a real 'work in progress'. At the time of Bernard's death, after 86 sermons, he had got as far as the first verse of the third chapter of the Canticle. His pupil Gilbert of Hoyland set himself the task of finishing this *Unvollendete*.

This biographical survey clearly demonstrates that Bernard's career looks in no way different from the busy life of a prince or a prelate. That being so the question arises as to whether he has been able in one way or another to preserve the monastic quiet and contemplative peace. To what degree did they suffer under the pressure of so active an existence? And even if Bernard has somehow succeeded in maintaining his peace of mind, one might reasonably expect his activities outside the monastery to have left behind some traces. Bernard for his part seems to have felt the tensions between the conflicting aspects of his existence. In a famous passage in his letter 250 he complains about the untenable contradiction in his life between the monastic precept of the *stabilitas loci* on the one hand and his endless travels as an ecclesiastic troubleshooter on the other.

It is time for me to think of myself. My monstrous existence, my tormented conscience beg for your pity because I have, so to speak, become the chimaera of my century. I am living neither as a cleric nor as a layman. Long ago I abandoned, if not the monastic habit, then, at least, the monastic way of life. (Ep 250 4)

³ See Bredero 1985, Rudolph 1990a.

As an autobiographical statement this passage makes an authentic impression. And if, as Adriaan Bredero has suggested,⁴ it is true that this conflict raging in Bernard's soul is to be related to the failure of the second crusade which he had preached so passionately, the historicity of this outcry is reinforced.

Yet at the same time other connotations ring through in this text. If the reader is but a little familiar with both the Augustinian and the Benedictine traditions, he can instantly recognise the monastic setting in this outcry. The restlessness of Augustine's soul is known from the *Confessions*. There, dissatisfied with his fate, he is looking for peace and security. In the monastic tradition this subtle, psycho-rhetorical restlessness had been stylised and turned into the ritual complaint with regard to the corruptibility of the human condition. In that manner Bernard can be seen to have kept his monastic peace of mind amidst the vicissitudes of active life, thus killing two birds with one stone.

The confusion resulting from this contamination between autobiographical data and the almost structural nature of the monastic existence becomes even more telling in Luther's reception of this theme of the *perdite vixi*/I have been living miserably. Bernard is known to have enjoyed an immense popularity with the Reformers, especially with Luther and Calvin. This popularity was in existence already in the late Middle Ages and survived whatever criticism the Reformers made of the medieval Church. Not unlike their Roman Catholic colleagues they regarded Bernard as the last of the Fathers. Like Augustine, he had succeeded in preserving Biblical purity at a time which, measured according to that criterion, had been moving progressively backwards.

Yet there is a certain irony in the fact that Luther, in criticising the monastic life and in abandoning it, referred to Bernard, the prototype of the medieval monk.

⁴ Bredero 1987–1988: 311–13. Bredero cautiously links the passage in letter 250 to the *perdite vixi* in Sermon 20 on the Song of Songs, the letter having been written between 1147–1150 and the sermon belonging to a group edited between 1145 and 1148. Bredero, rightly, warns against over-psychologising Bernard's exclamation in letter 250 and picturing his life as marked by an identity split between sanctity and worldly ambition. See also Bredero 1993: 211–19.

Why? Bernard's *perdite vixi* had come down to Luther in the shape of different texts contracted into one. A passage from Sermon 20 on the Song of Songs:

I have been living miserably because I have been wasting my time. All I know is that you, o God, will not reject a contrite and humble heart⁵ (SC 20 I 1)

had merged with a story from the *Vita prima*,⁶ also occurring in the *Legenda aurea*.⁷ In that story Bernard appears to be seriously ill, indeed, on the brink of death.⁸ In the version as it was known to Luther the entire scene had been moved to the moment of Bernard's death-bed. Linked with the quotation from Letter 250 in which Bernard complains about his having given up, if not the habit, then certainly the life of a monk, Luther's interpretation of the Bernardine *perdite vixi* presents us with an interesting paradox. In Luther's view Bernard's life as the object of the *accusatio sui* on his death-bed seems to be transformed into a praiseworthy kind of behaviour. The rupture with the Benedictine *stabilitas loci* so resented by Bernard himself was viewed by Luther as a positive breakaway from the introversion of the monastery and as a concrete application of his own maxim *sub votis sine votis*.⁹ Luther is quite explicit on this issue. Neither did Bernard sin nor did he keep his monastic vow when he left the monastery in order to travel for pope and princes. All he did was use the Christian liberty and abandon the 'captivity of vows', the *captivitas votorum*. Thus, for Luther, the only way to do justice to Bernard's *perdite vixi* is to read it as a Bernardine version of his own last words to be: *Wir sind Bettler*/we are beggars. The utter inability on the part of the sinner to survive God's judgment does not stop at the borders of the monastery. In the present life there is neither place nor time—and, by implication, neither monastic site nor habit—offering shelter to the soul haunted

⁵ See previous note.

⁶ *Vita prima*, I, 12, 57; PL 185: 258.

⁷ *Legenda aurea*; Graesse: 533.

⁸ For the development of the *perdite vixi* in Luther's early writings, see Bell 1989: 198–99. Leclercq 1969: 73 deals with the theme as it occurs in the work of Bernard.

⁹ Bell 1989: 216; See Luther's *De votis monasticis*, Weimar Ausgabe 8: 601.

by the divine. The exclusive counter-point to this wasteland is the free and undeserved grace of God.

If we turn once more to our opening image of the monastery in the wilderness, it should be noted that for Bernard life is no less of a wasteland than for Luther. His *perdite vixi* is as 'authentic' and far-reaching as Luther's. Yet form, representing grace, is never absent. Prior to whatever deliberation of the believing or reasoning mind, the monastic habit—like the monastic environment—qualifies its bearer. Thus the (Lutheran) question with regard to the priority of God or man in the attribution of grace turns into a vicious circle—at least, seen from the viewpoint of the discursive mind—and cannot be dealt with unless one admits to being part of it. The monk's life is marked by penitence. Consequently, it is not the possibilities or the impossibilities of the human existence which count. In fact, hidden in the monk's penitential behaviour, symbolised by his habit, a kind of form, grace and beauty can be detected which is as inevitably present as the paradise he is living in. As a result, the *accusatio sui* which is at the centre of his life appears to coincide with the self-justification by which it is, indeed, preceded. The former is but the latter become operational.¹⁰ What then is the technique underlying this process of self-accusation and self-justification?

Matters would be relatively simple if we were able to confine our description of the *perdite vixi* to a monastic ritual. In that case the 'personal' outcry 'I have been living miserably' in Sermon 20 on the Song of Songs, should be read exclusively as part of the penitential mill kept going by monastic prayer and chant. However, Bernard's complaint in letter 250 with regard to his own life is situated in a different context. There, rather than performing a monastic ritual, he laments his involuntary existence outside the monastery. As a consequence, we are confronted with the following question. When complaining about his life in the world, does Bernard mean that his use of the *perdite vixi* has lost its monastic, ritual ring? In other words, is he serious, does he really want us to

¹⁰ For a description of this technique of monastic meditation, see Pranger 1984.

believe that he has been living miserably? On the other hand, if there is some monastic connotation left, does Bernard—and if so, why—need the outside world to bring out the full and deepest dimensions of life as ritual failure?

An answer to those questions would reveal the very structure of Bernard's thought. But, clearly, a straight answer cannot be given. Digressions being part and parcel of Bernard's rhetorical style, they also underlie his movements in and outside the monastery. At the same time those digressions, whether on a rhetorical, historical or psychological level (and of course, on the level of the Bernardine text they all converge into one), mark the basic outlook of the *figura* which, in my view, governs Bernard's comings and goings in his 'miserable' life both inside and outside the monastery. In the end, it is one and the same Canticle-image of the bridegroom having left the bedroom of the King to rest in the fields which is the model framing the abbot's sermons as well as his own 'imitative' behaviour in the world. In other words, as I hope to point out, Bernard's account of his excursions outside the monastery in the world of business and politics, reflects the ritualised return to the monastery without ceasing to be the story of the real—and resented—digressions they are.

Before having a closer look at Bernard's techniques of self-accusation and self-justification as woven into the discourse of his sermons, it might be useful to pay some attention to him as accuser of others, the latter activity, in my view, being an extension of the former. For it is not in the least part his skills as prosecutor of others upon which Bernard's reputation is built. And even though it should be realised that his use of invective language is as much part of the literary tradition as the self-accusing terminology, it is clear that he excelled in both genres. As we shall have the opportunity to see, the brilliance of the inquisitor will turn out to be more than balanced by the brilliance of self-accusation and, indeed, of self-pity, while, in the end, all elements—accusation of others, self-accusation, self-pity and self-justification—will be seen to converge in one and the same monastic exercise.

I propose, then, to give three examples of Bernard's literary reflection of his extra-mural activities. First, I shall give a brief account of his criticism of the monastic life in Cluny. Second,

attention will be focused on the plight of Abelard facing the accusations of Bernard at the council of Sens. And, lastly, I shall observe Bernard apologising, or, rather, refusing to apologise, for the failure of the second crusade. The question will be raised as to the relationship between monastic space and the world at large. Both coming together in the notion of Jerusalem, Bernard's attitude towards the failure of the second crusade will turn out to depend on his ultimate reduction of the historic Holy Place in Palestine to the Jerusalem of Clairvaux.

Let us first turn to Bernard's famous requisitory against Cluny. Brilliantly he scorns the wealth of Cluny and the luxurious way of monastic life of its monks. The satire describing the Cluniacs making the rounds of the markets, 'unrolling many bolts of cloth, examining them with both fingers and eyes, and holding them up to the sunlight' is more than effective. Nor does the list of refined omelette-recipes meant to replace more solid food on fast days, miss its objective.

Who can say in how many ways that eggs alone (I won't mention the rest) are beat and buffeted, with how much care they are turned one way and then another, cooked soft, hard, and scrambled? How they are served now fried, now baked, now stuffed, now mixed with other things, and now separately. What is the point of all this, except that lack of appetite alone is looked after? (Apo IX 20; Rudolph 1990a: 267)

Then come the ornamentations in the cloister. What are the profane and monstrous images of animals doing in this sacred place?

What is that ridiculous monstrosity doing, an amazing kind of deformed beauty and yet a beautiful deformity? What are the filthy apes doing there? The fierce lions? The monstrous centaurs? The creatures, part man and part beast? The striped tigers? The fighting soldiers? The hunters blowing horns?...In short, everywhere so plentiful and astonishing a variety of contradictory forms is seen that one would rather read in the marble than in the books, and spend the whole day wondering at every single one of them than in meditating in the law of

God. Good God! If one is not ashamed of the absurdity, why is one not at least troubled at the expense? (Apo XII 29; Rudolph 1990a: 283)

And if the Cluniac monk, timidly, almost like a Lutheran, defends his life style by pointing at the fact that with regard to devotional matters it is the intention of the heart which counts and not the formality of the habit, Bernard counters by referring to the Rule. Outside the monastery gold, money and decorations may make sense.

But we who have withdrawn from the people, we who have left behind all that is precious and beautiful in this world for the sake of Christ, we who regard as dung all things shining in beauty; soothing in sound, agreeable in fragrance, sweet in taste, pleasant in devotion, I ask, do we strive to excite in all this? What interest do we seek from these things; the astonishment of fools or the offerings of the simple? (Apo XII 28; Rudolph 1990a: 281)

Obviously, Bernard's complaint is based on the Rule which he considers to be the shared property of both Cistercians and the other Benedictine orders. One of the most essential features of that Rule is the concept of poverty which is supposed to govern the monastic existence. That poverty ought to manifest itself in the behaviour of the monk both on a material and a spiritual level. As a consequence, the argument that behind the monastic habit an inner self might be hidden which would be able to relativise the external world and its wealth, does not hold. The quintessence of the monastic life is the materialisation of the poverty, i.e. of the monk permanently saying *perdite vixi*. Clearly, a luxurious life style would run counter to this basic principle and hamper its execution. The miserable life of the monk is marked by his poverty, personified in his monastic habit. Only when dressed in that manner, is he capable of making his life of poverty operational. That very dress enables him to accuse not only others but also himself.

Another example of Bernard's accusatory activities is his famous attack on Abelard at the council of Sens, the literary reflection of which is found in Bernard's letters to pope Innocent II. The official version of the event is that doctrinal problems concerning the

Trinity were at stake as well as questions regarding the role of the devil in the process of fall and redemption. As for the problem of redemption, the traditional view had been that since his fall man had become the legal property of the devil. It was up to Christ to redeem him from this bondage. Anselm of Canterbury had been the first to refute this view and replace it by a more sophisticated one reducing the process of redemption to something taking place between God and man exclusively. Abelard, in his writings, had followed Anselm in this respect and it is precisely at this point that Bernard took offence. At the request of others, so he says, he intervened on behalf of the bishops and against Abelard at the council of Sens, thus setting the stage for the latter's condemnation. Abelard, for his part, did not survive the blow. As a result of this condemnation his career came to an end. On his way to Rome in order to appeal to the pope against the sentence pronounced on him in Sens, he was persuaded by Peter the Venerable to give in, to stop the fight and settle down into the relative calm of the monastic life.

The result of this controversy looks all the more bitter if we realise that, as to the problem of the devil's power, in spite of Bernard's suggestions, the two contestants were rather close, a fact which is obscured by the force of Bernard's rhetorical argumentation.¹¹

Just as in his philippic against Cluny Bernard here uses the rhetorical hyperbole. He thus makes as much fun of Abelard's dialectical sophistication as he did of Benedictine elegance in matters of textile and architecture.

We have in France a new theologian, a student of the old master, who since his childhood has played around in logic and now babbles studying the Holy Writ. Doctrines which had been condemned in the past and silenced, both his and others', are brought back to life by him. Moreover, he adds new ones to them. He claims not to be ignorant of whatever is to be found in heaven above or on earth below, except of the phrase 'I do not know'. He puts his mouth into the heavens and examines the divine heights, and, returning to us, he utters words

¹¹ See Chapter Seven.

inexpressible. Being prepared to use reason in order to account for everything, even for that which surpasses reason, he proudly sins against reason, and against faith. (Ep 190 I 1)

Bernard's harshness with regard to Abelard has become archetypal of the attitude of the churchman toward the philosopher: a blind trust in faith against the clarity of rational analysis. In that respect, it is not surprising that Bernard's behaviour in this affair should have contributed to his popularity with the Reformers.

Yet watching Bernard dressed in his monastic habit confront Abelard—also in a monastic habit—could shed new light on the whole affair. Of course, this is no attempt to exonerate Bernard. Viewed from whatever angle, his behaviour at the council of Sens was cruel and premeditated. The way in which Bernard, in letter 189, admits having been persuaded, almost forcibly, to enter the scene as a little David against a heavily armed Goliath, i.e. Abelard,¹² only reinforces this premeditated aspect and adds to the cruelty. As on so many other occasions, he colours his accusations of others with notions of self-pity. But in that genre his adversary equally excelled: here the two contestants were second, or third, to none. However, the monastic habit does make a difference which may be illustrated through a comparison between the situation in Cluny and the accusations against Abelard. Just as in Bernard's view the poverty of Clairvaux differs from the poverty of Cluny, so his own self-pity differs from Abelard's in the *Historia calamitatum*.¹³ Just as the wealth of Cluny appeared to frustrate the functioning of monastic poverty, Abelard's intellectual pride, tied up as it is with the latter's self-pity at the refusal of others to acknowledge his talents, would seem to frustrate—so Bernard's train of

¹² Abelard, on his part, describing the activities of the dialectician, likens himself to David fighting Goliath (*Theologia summi boni*, Book 2, 223; Mews: 122). I would like to thank Dr Michael Clanchy for drawing my attention to this passage.

¹³ Even in this respect Bernard and Abelard are much closer than the polemical situation in which their names have met suggests. In his reply to Heloise's reaction to the *Historia calamitatum* Abelard offers 'small consolations' by giving her his Rule. See the article of P.J. Cramer, 'Small Consolations', forthcoming. Cramer subtly connects the uncertain, 'contingent' elements of Abelard's life with the 'consolation' offered by the 'structural' elements of providence and the monastic life. See also Dronke 1984: 107–140.

thought might be reconstructed—the monastic technique of self-accusation and self-justification of which the self-pity is a part. Bernard's own, monastic self-pity, this argument seems to imply, is of a better quality. Once again it should be stated: this arrogance does not excuse Bernard for his infamous behaviour at the council of Sens. All one can say is that he refused, or was incapable, to treat his opponent, however unfrocked, as someone who was not a monk, as someone who, even if he had given up the monastic habit, had done so in vain.¹⁴ Certainly, this concern for others on Bernard's part did not manifest itself in the shape of compassion. But just as he addressed the monks of Cluny as the Benedictine colleagues they were, so he judged Abelard's theological ideas according to their (lack of) dramatic, monastic setting.¹⁵ From that point of view the last years of Abelard's life have an ironical ring about them. To the satisfaction of all parties concerned he spent the last years of his turbulent life within the walls of a monastic house owned by Cluny, the order as fiercely criticised by Bernard for its outward luxury and inward devotion as was Abelard for his spectacular and private use of reason.

After dealing with Bernard's self-accusation as a part of the monastic rite, and with his accusation of others as an extension of the monastic duty, I shall discuss a situation in which others, in turn,

¹⁴ Neither Bernard nor Abelard have really given up the monastic habit. But both of them have been living an atypical monastic life in that they spent much, or, in Abelard's case, most of the time outside the monastery and in that respect they can be said to have had trouble with keeping on their monastic habit. As for Bernard, his treatment of Abelard echoes his own complaints about his 'miserable life' as well as his scorning his runaway nephew Robert in his first letter. To put it in Abelardian terms, it is Abelard's intention to break away from the monastic pattern that Bernard is after.

¹⁵ In Chapter Seven I give a detailed account of Bernard's dramatisation of the origin of sin through the story from Genesis about Jacob's flight from Laban. See Chapter Seven: 271.

I want to stress the fact that I am here describing the controversy between Bernard and Abelard from Bernard's point of view. As for Abelard, I believe that his dramatic power is as strong and intense as Bernard's. His Hymns, for instance, display a directness and an 'individuality' in appropriating biblical themes to private situations which reminds one of Bernard's literary audacity in associating himself with the success and failure of the *dramatis personae* in sacred history. Cf. Dronke 1970: 119–45.

have taken Bernard to task. At the time the utter failure of the second crusade raised questions, not only with regard to the political wisdom of its planners, but also with regard to the nature of prophecy and preaching. What did the prophet Bernard have to say about the disastrous outcome of an enterprise of which he himself had been the *auctor intellectualis*? The irritation on the part of Bernard's contemporaries provides us with the opportunity to watch him handle a situation in which failure, far from merely being a ritualized expression of monastic self-esteem as in the *perdite vixi*, is kept down to earth by its crude historicity. Within the framework of this book in which I intend to describe the image of the monastic site, the answer to those questions is to be found in a reply to our earlier question. What on earth did Bernard the abbot seek outside his monastery? Did he really need this spatial extension of the monastery in order to live the monastic version of the *perdite vixi* to the full?¹⁶

In 1129 a young canon from Lincoln by the name of Philip interrupted his journey to Jerusalem to pause in Clairvaux. On the spot he decided to stay. In reply to questions by the young man's bishop, Alexander, with regard to the legal details of the transaction, Bernard, eloquently as ever, defended Philip's decision to enter the monastic profession.

Your Philip has taken a short cut on his way to Jerusalem. Thus he arrived quickly at the place of his destination. In no time (*in brevi*) he crossed this vast and spacious sea, and sailing successfully, he has already landed on the shore of his destination and arrived in the harbour of salvation. Right now his feet are standing in the courts of Jerusalem, and 'he willingly adores on the spot His feet have touched the one whom he has heard tidings of in Ephrata and found in the woodland plains'. He has entered the holy city, he has chosen his heritage with those of whom it is rightly said: 'You are no longer exiles or aliens; the saints are your fellow citizens, you belong to God's household.' With those he is going in and out, having become one of them, and with them he glorifies saying:

¹⁶ See Diers 1991. Diers sees Bernard's activities in the world as an attempt to impose 'angelic life' on it. See also note 23.

‘Our dwelling is in heaven’. Therefore, rather than a curious spectator, he is a devout inhabitant and an enroled citizen of Jerusalem, not of this earthly Jerusalem to which mount Sinai in Arabia is related, which is in bondage with her children, but of that free Jerusalem, which is above and the mother of us all. And if you insist on knowing, this is no other than Clairvaux. She herself is Jerusalem, affiliated to the Jerusalem which is in heaven, by the complete devotion of the mind, by the imitative way of life and by a spiritual affinity. His promise to stay implies that it is here that his rest will be for ever more. He has chosen this spot for his dwelling because there can be found, if not yet the vision, then certainly the expectation of that peace of which it is said: ‘The peace of God which surpasses all our understanding.’ (Ep 64 1)

This passage is striking not only for the boldness of the claim that Clairvaux is identical with Jerusalem or the strong language suggesting the monastic site in its material shape to be the last resting-place for a young man’s body and soul. Even more conspicuously, the imagery of spatial dimensions, the travelling in the mind, the crossing of the sea and setting foot on foreign shores contribute to the intensely poetical nature of this letter. This spatial extension culminates in an evocation of the heavenly Jerusalem ‘where our dwelling is’. Yet rather than through extension, the very effect of spaciousness is achieved, paradoxically, through reducing the heavenly city to the material site and size of Clairvaux. Staying in Clairvaux instead of continuing his journey to the Holy Land, Philip appears to have taken a short cut (*compendium viae*) both in place and time (*transfretavit in brevi hoc mare*). It is this short cut which enables him to make his *Reise ins Paradies*, to be free from earthly bondage, to extend life into fantastic dimensions, to come and go with the heavenly citizens.

In the following chapters I want to elaborate on the notion that the use of short cuts functions as a basic feature in Bernard’s thought both on a rhetorical and a theological level. After reality has once and for all been condensed in the *verbum abbreviatum*/‘the abridged Word’ spoken by God in the incarnation of Christ, the monastery is the place where this divine ‘short cut’ is rhetorically re-enacted over and over again. Imitating his Lord, the monk makes the same divine

movements and stages the same divine performance in one and the same *figura*. In a sense, then, Letter 64 can be said to foreshadow this *figura* which comprises not only Christ in his incarnation but all dynamics of divine rest. It is Christ incarnate, but also the heavenly Jerusalem. It is the crib at the Nativity, but also the cross at Calvary. It is the enclosed tomb, but also the fields of Galilee for which Christ has departed. It is Christ coming into the world in the guise of the bridegroom from the Canticle but also Christ leaving this world for heaven just as in the Canticle the bridegroom leaves the intimacy of the bedroom to rest in the fields. In short, arriving at the Jerusalem which is Clairvaux indeed means having found eternal rest. At the same time, the *figura* of this heavenly site implies departure as well. Taking place as much in the mind as did the arrival by way of a mental short cut, this departure is pictured as being part of a continuous process of coming and going within the walls of the Holy City.

...he has entered the city...With them (the heavenly citizens) he is *going in and out (intrans et exiens)* and he glorifies saying: 'Our dwelling is in heaven.'

It is this lofty, spiritual status of the heavenly Jerusalem, caught in the material site of the monastery, this presence in the guise of absence, which lends the monastic life as the reflection of celestial calm and achievement a unique kind of dynamics and unrest.

If I next turn to Bernard's apology for the failure of the second crusade, I do not intend to discuss the psychological or political motives for his behaviour. Nor do I deny that such motives may have played a role in the affair. However, in this study my aim is to concentrate on the literary-monastic structure of Bernard's work proper, rather than to use it as a source for further historical research. In the meantime I assume that my literary reconstruction of Bernard, if correctly executed, will in no way contradict the results of historical analysis.¹⁷

If the strong imagery of Jerusalem/Clairvaux in letter 64 is compared with Bernard's apology for the failure of the second crusade in the prologue to *De consideratione* II, the following

¹⁷ See Diers 1991.

questions spring to mind. What is left of the short cut realised in the monastic journey to Jerusalem when Bernard talks about the reality of travelling outside the monastery? Or, if we reconsider his preaching of the crusade, does he judge the matter from an entirely different, more secular point of view?¹⁸ Is it really true, then, as has been suggested above, that the utter, physical failure of the crusade prevents it from becoming the object of the monastic rite of the *perdite vixi*?

In a cautious approach to Bernard's text, I start from quite a different assumption. Whatever Bernard's motives for leaving the monastery and preaching the crusade may have been, the latter's failure provided him with yet another, indeed, with a unique, challenge to draw the vicissitudes of worldly events within the walls of the monastic ritual. There the monk shapes his celestial existence through permanently saying: *perdite vixi*. Going in and out within the confines of the monastic site, he imposes a short cut on the 'physical' journey to Jerusalem. As a result, his monstrous life is as much part of that process as his blissful existence. The one-dimensionally tragic nature of extra-mural events notwithstanding, would it not be a spectacular success on the part of the monastic author, if he managed to take yet another short cut by mentally 'crossing the vast and spacious sea and landing safely', if he succeeded convincingly in abridging those events and have them absorbed into the magic spell of his mini-Jerusalem?

For the time being, all that is visible is the 'shipwreck', the general perdition of the crusaders on their way to the Holy Land. Such is the situation which Bernard had to face when challenged to account for the quality of his preaching and prophecy. On that level of

¹⁸ See Diers 1991: 349–98. Diers rightly points out that, with regard to Jerusalem, a 'literalisation' occurs in the course of Bernard's life. However, as I intend to demonstrate below, the degree to which Bernard, in the Apology for the failure of the second crusade, withdraws from the scene of historical events while identifying himself with the mystery of the divine, suggests that for him there is still a 'spiritual' *locus* he can withdraw to. Diers discusses the Apology in a different part of her book (188–90) in a section on Bernard's justification of action as *Wirken für Christus*, or in my terms, his identification with the *figura* of Christ and God. But the Apology, including the act of withdrawal, is also to be seen as an intrinsic part of the views Bernard held at the period of his preaching the crusade and of its failure.

argumentation his reply seems rather simple. Complaints with regard to the inadequacy of his preaching the crusade wrongly assume historical events to be governed by a pattern of causality in which things are judged according to their outcome (*facta ex eventibus aestimare*). Bernard's refusal to accept such a causal explanation of history ultimately boils down to his refusal to give any explanation at all.

To those questions [i.e. the request for proofs of his reliability as a preacher] I have no answer; may my reticence be respected in this matter. You [i.e. pope Eugenius III] must answer for me and for yourself according to what you have seen and heard,¹⁹ or, indeed, according to what God will suggest to you. (Csi II I 3)

Ea quae audisti et vidisti/what you have seen and heard. What a special kind of reticence Bernard presents us with! His refusal to answer questions is nothing less than an appeal to the pope, the addressee of *De consideratione*, to use his papal eyes and ears. In that respect it is important to note that Bernard's apology is part of a treatise on Consideration. As in the Sermons on the Song of Songs excursions and digressions into both the spiritual and the practical are part of the genre, here the apology is equally part of an ongoing argument. Thus the evaluation of the second crusade is turned into yet another exercise in the practical use of *consideratio*.

You may wonder why I pursue those issues deviating from what I had proposed to discuss. I am doing this, not because I have forgotten about the order of my discourse but because I think that it [i.e. the excursus with regard to the failure of the crusade] fits in rather well. (Csi II 1 4)

¹⁹ Mabillon—and recently Diers 1991: 189—relate this expression of modesty to the miracles by which Bernard's preaching of the crusade had been accompanied: *Miracula subintelligit quibus Deus Bernardi praedicationem et hortationes ad bellum sacrum probavit* (PL 182: 744D). He refers to the account of Bernard's miracles in book III, c. 4 of the *Vita prima* and to *Ep.* 242, in which Bernard warns against the false prophets (i.e. the heretics of Toulouse) who preach their heretical doctrines *induentes sibi formam pietatis*. Both in Bernard's self-perception as expressed in *De consideratione* and in the hagiographical account of the 'events' as recorded in the *Vita prima* 'seeing and hearing' are to be viewed as part of a more complex cluster of historical and literary/imaginative elements. They all come together in the concept of *figura*.

So, referring the whole matter of his supposedly flawed preaching to the issue under consideration, Bernard raises the problem of the 'meaning of history' to a different level. Far from falling completely silent, he uses his modesty and reticence to evoke yet another prophetic *figura*. Requested to judge the matter according to what he has 'seen and heard', the pope is invited to associate Bernard the preacher with Christ who, in spite of the miracles he wrought, was not believed upon his word.

I shall return later to this nucleus of Bernard's argument as an apology within an apology and to his use of reticence as an economical device in judging history. First I shall focus on the arguments preceding this return to 'consideration'.

Roughly speaking, the apology consists of two parts. First we are presented with a dramatic picture of the events. Second, two tentative explanations are tried out: one based on the story of Moses and the people of Israel in the desert, and the other on a story taken from the Book of Judges. Those attempts are then followed by Bernard's raising the question of his own reliability and his request to the pope to believe what 'he has seen and heard'.

Having cast a preliminary glance at Bernard's solution of the problem of the meaning of history, one is struck by the sharp contrast between the appeal to spiritual seeing and hearing on the one hand, and his realistic description of the scenes witnessed by the crusaders themselves on the other. If this apology is indeed organized according to the rhetorical principle of *sic et non*, the *non* admittedly gets its due. Rightly, the gentiles ask: where is their God?

No wonder. The sons of the Church, supposed to be called Christians, lie slain in the desert, killed by the sword or perished from hunger. Dissent has spread among the princes and the Lord made them wander off on impassable roads, not keeping them on their way...How shaken are the feet of those announcing peace, announcing good tidings. We said: 'Peace,' but there is no peace. We promised good things, and, lo and behold, there is confusion as if we have been too bold and light-hearted in this matter. Clearly, we have embarked on this matter not as on something uncertain, but ordered by you, yea through you by God. Why have we fasted while He refused to

look upon us, and why have we humiliated ourselves while He ignored us? 'For in all this His fury has not been averted but His hand has been stretched out.' How patiently meanwhile does He go on to listen to the sacrilegious and blasphemous voices of the Egyptians because he shrewdly brought them out to kill them in the desert? But who does not know that God's judgments are true? And his verdict is such an abyss that in my view that person is rightly pronounced blessed who is not scandalized by it. (Csi II 1)

The theme of the 'flawed prophet' had been discussed by Bernard in quite a different context. In Sermon 2 on the Song of Songs, for instance, written about 1135, he had illustrated the intensity of the desire to be 'kissed with the kiss of the [bridegroom's] mouth', by pointing to the Old Testament patriarchs.²⁰ They had been desperately longing for that kiss, i.e. for the coming of Christ, be it without success. The intensity of their desire was matched by the intensity of failure. Almost sarcastically Bernard describes the attempts of the Old Testament prophets to announce peace, 'but there was no peace'. Seen from the viewpoint of fulfilment established by the coming of Christ, their efforts were bound to fail. Here and now, however, in the Jerusalem of the monastery, that past failure can but serve to heighten the present desire of those who are already in the know and live the angelic life. Like Philip, the inhabitants of that Holy City have chosen 'this spot for their dwelling in expectation of the peace which surpasses all understanding'.

If we apply the compact size of the monastic Holy City to the cruel course of history as expressed in this account of the second crusade, fulfilment seems to have disappeared altogether. Yet in my view Bernard never allows prophetic, 'angelic' speech to lose all of its original, that is, monastic flavour. Just as in Sermon 2 on the Song of Songs he mocks the Old Testament prophets for their faltering speech announcing peace but failing to bring it about, he here introduces himself theatrically as yet another flawed prophet. But however flawed his mission may turn out to have been, he has thereby made himself, through the intermediary of the pope, part of the voice of God (*sed te iubente, immo per te Deo*). Consequently,

²⁰ For a discussion of this passage, see Chapter Eight.

his failure has become God's failure, and vice versa. Thus Bernard has situated himself inside the mystery and the abyss of the divine judgment. The latter may be accused because of its alleged injustice and cruelty. But we all know that in the end divine justice cannot be held responsible. Although, momentarily, the 'monstrosity of life' might seem to apply even to God—and, extra-murally, historically speaking, it does so, indeed—, He will eventually be exonerated. After all is said and done, we will have to leave Him, and his prophet, alone, 'respecting their reticence, sparing their timidity'.

In a brilliant *mise-en-scène* Bernard goes on to give two Old Testament examples of the alleged failure of divine promises and prophetic speech.

How then does human temerity dare to be reprehensive with regard to what is beyond comprehension? Let us recall past judgments of old. They may offer some consolation. For someone has said: 'I remembered your judgments of old, o Lord and have been comforted.' I talk of something known to all, yet at present known to no one. For that is how we mortals behave: what we know when there is no need for it, we do not know when necessary. Moses when about to lead his people out of the land of Egypt promised them a better country. For what reason would there be for the people to follow him if they only knew their own country? He led them out. But those whom he had led out he did not introduce into the land he had promised. Yet this sad and unexpected event is not due to any temerity of the leader. In all he did, he acted on the order of the Lord while the Lord cooperated and confirmed his work, and signs occurred. 'But this people,' he said, 'are obdurate, always plotting against the Lord and his servant Moses.' So be it. These lacked faith and were rebellious. But what about those? Ask it to them. What must I tell what they themselves confess? I say one thing. How could they ever make progress when they turned around when on their way? Had they not, in their hearts, gone all the way back to Egypt? And if these people of old fell and were killed because of their iniquities, should we be surprised that modern-day people suffered the same fate when behaving similarly? But you do not think, do you, that their downfall at that time went against the promises

of God? Neither does theirs. For never is God's justice overruled by his promises. But listen to something else.

Benjamin had sinned. The other tribes run to arms in order to take revenge, not without the expressed will of God. He had even assigned their commander. They fight, relying on their superior strength and their better case, and, what is most important, on divine favour. But how horrible is God in his treatment of the children of men! The revengers of crime had to turn their backs on the criminals, those who were greater in number on those who were less so. However, they return to God, and God to them. 'Attack,' he says. Once more they attack, and once more they suffer a shattering defeat. That is how the righteous embark on the just fight—the first time under God's favour, the second time by his command—only to succumb. But the weaker they are in battle, the more superior they prove to be in faith. What then would have been the reaction of the crusaders if I had encouraged them once more to attack, and if they had succumbed once more? What if they had heard me tell them for a third time to embark again on the journey and on the work in which they had failed time and again? And yet the Israelites, ignoring the two earlier failures, prepare for a third battle, and are victorious. However, some may say: 'How do we know that the word has come from God? What signs do you perform that we may trust you?' To those questions I do not answer: may my timidity be spared. You must answer for me and for yourself, according to what you have seen and heard, or, surely, according to what God will suggest to you. (Csi II 2–3)

It is clear that the narrative shape in which Bernard's apology is wrapped provides him with the opportunity to suggest rather than to point out. Suggestion of guilt and failure is after all more effective and powerful than a mere statement. The people and the tribes of Israel serve as models which turn the present-day crusaders into hypothetical participants in ancient stories without the latter losing a definite sense of distance. Thus Bernard avoids being drawn into identifying culprits one-dimensionally. Yet the compelling force of the stories considerably reinforces the dramatic aspects of recent events. In that dramatisation we are presented with the following paradox. On the one hand, those stories present a

completeness which is conspicuously lacking in modern history. On the other hand, that very completeness produces a basic kind of open-endedness in past and modern history which allows Bernard both to 'explain' himself vis-à-vis his contemporaries and to withdraw from the scene. The different levels and points of view ('focalisations') of this narrative are held together by the subject-matter of the book he is in the process of writing: 'consideration' as the expression of that which is fixed and secure (*firmum et fixum*) in reality.²¹

As for the completeness, the full content and outcome of the stories is known to all, both in the case of the people of Israel in the desert eventually entering the Holy Land and of the Israelites achieving victory at their third attempt to attack. However, within the stories themselves obscurity and confusion reign. The people in the desert, refusing to listen to the prophetic speech of Moses, wander around purposelessly. Rather than making progress they move backwards. And in the next story from the book of Judges the obscurity is even greater. The Israelites fighting for a just cause are held in suspense with regard to the final outcome. They have, it seems, to rely on blind faith. And even the eventual victory hardly makes up for the cruelty of the preceding defeats.

Seen from the viewpoint of the participants those stories are marked by a basic kind of open-endedness. As a result, the role of the prophet is highlighted. All the Israelites have to go by is the voice of Moses and the command of God. But instead of lending meaning and sense to historical events, the divine and prophetic voices only seem to make things worse, thus contributing to the fundamental uncertainty with regard to the final outcome. They leave history as unfinished as it is.²² Indeed, by speaking out only

²¹ See Evans 1983: 213; Csi I III 6.

²² Put in terms of modern literary criticism different moments of focalisation (points of view) can be discerned in the text (cf. Bal 1985; for an analysis of the biblical story itself, see Bal 1988), although Bernard's simultaneous participation in, and withdrawal from, his own text considerably complicates the matter. First, there is the 'omniscient' author who is in command of the stories he is telling. Next the author can be seen to insert in his text a focalisation on the part of the biblical antagonists (the Israelites in the desert and the tribes of Israel in the story from the book of Judges). Doing so, he somehow suspends the stories he is in the process of telling, inviting the reader to identify with the insecure status of the knowledge of the participants

next to withdraw from the scene, they intensify the incompleteness and cruelty of history.

In applying those stories to recent events, it is not for the victims of history that Bernard reserves his feelings of sadness and compassion. If someone has to be pitied, it is the prophet Moses whose 'sad and unexpected' fate it was to have received a promise to enter the promised land but to have been denied permission to enter it. Thus the fragility of the prophetic and divine voices comes to the fore. Here the monastic short cut to Jerusalem strikes. It is true enough that from his monastic perspective Bernard is just unable to offer the world, even the world of the crusaders, compassion and consolation in the case of failure. The monastic mentality does not impose order upon the world, however just its cause. Yet, associating himself with Moses, and through Moses and through the story from the Book of Judges with the voice of God, Bernard offers the extra-mural world all he has in (monastic) store. Eventually, the cruel fate of the crusaders is seen and appreciated from the viewpoint of the prophetic *figura*, Moses, Christ or Bernard himself. Theirs is the real misery: to have promised but not being allowed to enter, the real failure to be believed upon their word, the real inconclusiveness of history. At the same time, Bernard's rhetorical

in the story who are still in the dark with regard to the final outcome of the events of which they themselves are the protagonists. In the third focalisation the attention focuses on the viewpoints of the prophet Moses, God and Christ which, eventually, condition the perspective of the actors in the stories. When next this third focalisation is taken one step further by being associated with the experience of the author, it seemingly destroys the image of the omniscient author. Identifying with the prophetic *figura* of the dying Moses, of God giving his unsuccessful battle-orders and of Christ the performer of much doubted miracles, Bernard, still in the guise of the narrator, reveals himself not only as the all-knowing author but also, precisely in his quality of narrator, as the source of historical failure, ignorance and fathomlessness, thus comprising participation in the stories he is telling and withdrawal from them.

The application of different points of view to the text also liberates Bernard from being restricted to one single point of comparison when applying the Old Testament to modern history. In fact, he is free to re-tell the stories as they develop driven by the bi-polar tension between the prophet/God and the people/tribes. In the end it is the former's manipulative powers which are reflected and imitated in the skilful manoeuvring on the part of the narrator.

presentation implies that the very same prophetic *figura* is none other than the 'inhabitant' of Jerusalem who, after 'having crossed the vast and rough sea, has set foot on shore and is going in and out (*intrans et exiens*)'.

Asking the pope to judge according to what he has seen and heard, Bernard, in the end, draws attention to the ritual and reality of the monastic myth—however 'out of place'—to 'consideration' of his own 'timid' withdrawal. This is not to say that Bernard's preaching did not make sense to an audience outside the monastery. All I want to point out is that the rhetorical organisation of his discourse in this passage as an 'apology within an apology' is paralleled by a basic mentality of enclosure and withdrawal. His refusal to answer questions is based on, and corresponds to, a perception of reality as contained by the *figura* of the divine and prophetic movement. The failure of Moses to enter the promised land and the failure of Jesus to be believed upon his deeds and words are part of that manifestation. Like Bernard and, indeed, like all prophets, they have been living a 'monstrous life',—having become the *chimaerae* of their age, each of them crying out: *perdite vixi*. From Bernard's monastic/rhetorical point of view,²³ however, prophetic 'extension' into

²³ I use 'monastic' here as a literary category. Of course, Bernard does not literally address the extra-mural audience in monastic terms. But the prophetic *figura* he evokes only makes sense within an enclosed literary space. In the 'real' world this literary enclosure has a parallel in the monastery. In the apology for the failure of the crusade the striking feature is Bernard's sketchy outline of the prophetic *figura*. As I intend to point out in the following chapters, it is through the use of this *figura* that underlying spiritual notions in more historical, literal texts can be brought to the surface, and vice versa. Rather than being additions to the text those notions are implied all along.

I agree with Diers that Bernard's perception of the extra-mural world is basically monastic. Unlike Diers, however, I do not believe that it was Bernard's ultimate aim to monasticize the world ('In Bernhard findet die das Erdreich des Leibes überwindende Spiritualität des Klosters ihre Entsprechung im weltüberwindenden Handeln,' Diers 1991: 397). On the contrary. The singularity of monastic life is intensified by the continued presence of unfinished business outside the monastery. Yet I should admit that it is very difficult to grasp exactly the subtle relationships between Bernard's monastic 'ideology' and his worldly activities since it requires the interpreter to take equal notion of literary texts organised according to the slow rhythm of monastic time and historical events. The matter is further complicated through Bernard's overt interventions in worldly affairs which, conveyed to posterity in

the world keeps being governed by the short cut taken once and for all in the supreme prophecy of Christ's incarnation. That short cut which conditions Moses' prophecy and God's battle orders as well as the rhythm of life in the Jerusalem of Clairvaux, leaves the broken dreams of the crusaders intact, indeed, cruelly so, while absorbing them in a ritual of superior failure and consolation.

different literary genres, do not always bear the recognisable stamp of their monastic vintage.

PART II

A WAY OF WRITING

INTRODUCTION PART II

A WAY OF WRITING

In the first volume of his book *Port-Royal* the nineteenth-century writer Sainte-Beuve tells the story of the young abbess Angélique Arnauld carrying out her decision to re-establish the *clôture* in her monastery. On Friday afternoon, 25 September 1609, she refuses to receive her relatives as usual in the monastery of Port-Royal itself. Instead, she stays behind the grill (*le guichet*) in the parlour. There follows a scene. Her father is furious, her mother speechless, Angélique faints. In describing this event Sainte-Beuve is almost carried away by its dramatic potential. He even suggests it should be called another Revolution. As one of the great moments in French history it is entitled to its own name-day: *la journée du guichet*.

Yet Sainte-Beuve's enthusiasm with regard to the importance of that day is tempered by his doubts with regard to the quality of his own description. Has he struck the right note in his dramatisation of the event? What are we to make of the fact that Racine in his *Abrégé de l'histoire de Port-Royal* does not mention the *journée du guichet* at all? All Racine has to say about the event is: *vers ce temps la mère Angélique fit fermer de bonnes murailles son abbaye*/about that time mother Angélique had her monastery closed off with solid walls.¹ Certainly, *Abrégés* are by definition insufficient (*insuffisants*) and untrustworthy (*infidèles*), but yet... 'One would be inclined to consider Racine's silence and omission to be a proof of literary timidity and taste (*de la timidité littéraire et du goût*). Perhaps he thought that scene too conspicuously natural and naive.'²

Racine's image of the *bonnes murailles* gives us the ingredients of Bernard's monastic site: enclosure and drama. At the same time

¹ Racine, *Abrégé de l'histoire de Port-Royal* (Picard 1966: 38).

² Sainte-Beuve, *Port-Royal* (Leroy 1953: 174).

Sainte-Beuve's reflection on Racine lends support to our efforts to draw the drama out of its almost silent enclosure. The rhetorical means by which to proceed can be called *timidité littéraire*, literary timidity. In the next two chapters I propose to use Sainte-Beuve's concept of 'literary timidity' to analyze Bernard's linguistic re-creation of the monastic site. In Chapter One we have already come across Bernard's bashfulness (*verecundia*) when we saw him withdrawing from the field of worldly events and disaster, begging to be left alone. In doing so, he could be observed to resort to a monastic *figura* from which the extra-mural area of history received its ultimate meaning, or, for that matter, meaninglessness.

The implications of this Bernardine move are far-reaching. Rather than simply leaving the extra-mural world unexplained and unaccounted for, this act of withdrawal re-creates *ab ovo* a place in which heaven and earth meet.³ Thus a complete reversal of temporal and spatial order takes place. This monastic re-creation claims a priority of the spiritual over the literal, of imagination over facts, of the artificial over the natural without excluding the one from the other. Thus it makes special demands on the person who undertakes to give a literary account of this process. Or, to put it once more in terms of the monastic site: entering the Cistercian monastery one is confronted with a mute complex of buildings and nature. The dramatic quality allegedly implied in this complex has to be brought to life, to be re-enacted. It will not be sufficient to use metaphors and symbols to describe what is going on. *Et si vultis scire, Clairvallis est. Ipsa est Ierusalem...*/and if you want to know, it is Clairvaux. She *herself* is Jerusalem. This very identity which underlies Bernard's use of biblical language, implies a certain absence of metaphorical distance. And even though we realise that, if we take Bernard here at his word, we allow ourselves to fall under the spell of optical illusions, the priority of the artificial over the real and natural requires both author and reader to participate in a drama of paradoxes. This paradox can be formulated as follows. The timidity of withdrawal is not basically different from the

³ This move does not add meaning to the world nor does it monasticize the world. It is the monastery which is put into relief with the help of extra-mural categories. The rest is silence.

seemingly presumptuous claim that the mini-world of Clairvaux comprises the vast and unmeasured spaces of the world at large.⁴

My aim is to watch Bernard moving around within the bounds of his own spiritual environment, ruminating, in terms of the *Canticum*, on one of the main themes of monastic existence: the spatial and temporal shape of the bride's and bridegroom's dwelling place. Now an essential part of this process of rumination is Bernard's public role as an author. In that role he does not hesitate to participate openly in the bridal drama described. Just as Philip goes in and out as a citizen of Clairvaux *alias* Jerusalem, Bernard, while describing the movements of the bride and groom, imitates the vicissitudes of literary absence and presence. As a result, the process of literary reflection and image-production becomes part of the overall dramatic-liturgical dynamics which keep the monastery going.

In view of the priority of the spiritual over the literal, I shall first present a reading of the twenty-third Sermon on the Song of Songs before summarizing Bernard's vivid description of the reality of the monastic life in his early work *On the Steps of Humility and Pride*. Sermon 23 on the Song of Songs is built up round the *cubiculum regis*/the (bed)chamber of the King (from the *Canticum*-text: 'The King has brought me into his bedchamber') as the place of love as well as of justice and judgment. The universe is governed from that enclosed spot. At the same time it does not cease to be the *locus* of intimate and almost ecstatic love-experience. No wonder that a special kind of 'literary timidity' is required on the part of the author who wishes to approach this spot. It is his task to re-create this *locus* in words without in the end becoming the victim of his own success. For throughout the literary process the author is in danger of being held back by the wildness and the illusionary power of his own language from which the fragile enclosure of his (re-)creation springs. He therefore runs as much of a risk of perishing in the desert as did the crusaders on their way to the Holy Land. However, in the same way that the failure of prophets like Moses

⁴ Here I take my argument that Bernard cruelly leaves the extra-mural world as it is one step further. In its unfinished and rough state Bernard has the world support his efforts to introduce and heighten the meaning of paradisiacal form. This is still not the same as saying that Bernard wants to monasticize the world.

is to be considered more complex and profound than that of the crusaders, the threat of literary inadequacy touches upon a deeper dimension than the mere falling short of rhetorical expectations. Far from being the result of fate, this risk of failure is part and parcel of the rhetorical process itself. Consequently a balancing act is required on the part of the monastic author in which success and failure figure in equal proportions. And that is precisely what 'literary timidity' is about.

The possibility of monastic perdition will be the main theme in Chapter Three dealing with the treatise on the Steps of Humility and Pride. Here the spiritual site described in Sermon 23 will be presented as materialised in its quintessential Benedictine shape. The *locus* of the monastery is the place within whose walls the monks go in and out, ascend and descend on the ladder of humility. By focusing on descent rather than ascent, Bernard introduces the category of failure as a constitutive factor in the monastic life. Thus reflections on contemplative rest, which also figure prominently in the treatise, will be accompanied and undercut by images of restless, sinful monks, the two extremes converging in the person of the monastic author. If there is any *stabilitas loci* to be found, it can only be achieved through the banishment of restless death from an environment which does not cease to be characterised by it: *Morimundus*. It is the course of this complex combination of *loci* and *imagines* that I want to trace in my account of Bernard's treatise. Somehow the stability of the monastic place must be related to the endless variation of images. The monastic author who takes it upon himself to describe this interrelation is not allowed to tell only one part of the story and stick exclusively to either success or failure, life or death, uncoordinated images or linguistic rest and silence. Once more the fate of the crusaders may illustrate the point. Just as their experience of failure does not make sense unless we take into account the remote prophetic *figura* of Moses on the mountain or, for that matter, of the abbot Bernard himself tucked away in his monastery, so the drama of monastic sin and perdition includes the stability of interior rest. It is, in the end, one uninterrupted ritual which is being performed by an author whose imaginative efforts to escape—'O, that I had the wings of the dove'—are bound to succeed to the same degree as they are bound to fail.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERARY TIMIDITY: THE TWENTY-THIRD SERMON ON THE SONG OF SONGS

1. Arrival and withdrawal

Should it happen to one of you at any one moment thus to be rapt and hidden in this secret sanctuary of God so as to be no longer distracted and disturbed by the demands of the senses or an agonizing care or pangs of guilt, or—what is even more difficult to remove—the phantasms imposed by bodily images, then such a person will be able to come back to us and utter the glorious words: ‘The King has brought me into his chambers’ (SC 23 VI 16).

This is how Sermon 23 ends. Rather than following the Vulgate-version *Introduxit me rex in cellaria sua*/‘the King has brought me into his storerooms’ which he had quoted at the beginning of the sermon, Bernard here reads the text in line with the Origenian tradition as: *Introduxit me rex in cubiculum suum*/‘the King has brought me into his bedroom’.¹ From this little touch it appears that in the view of the author the text stands up to a mystical interpretation. Yet, as far as the author’s participation in such an event is concerned, he does not sound very confident. It is others who might qualify for participation in a mystical experience rather than the *ego* of the narrator. What has happened?

From the point of view of exegetical techniques the structure of the sermon is relatively simple. The short text *Introduxit me rex* is expanded both on a literal and on a spiritual level. The story of the ‘letter’ runs as follows. The bride and her friends are running to the storerooms of the bridegroom. Driven by her ardent love the bride is the first to arrive and the only one to be admitted. Her friends, trailing behind, are not allowed in. Weak as they are they have not

¹ See Deroy 1963: 13–96.

been able to imitate the intensity of the bride's desire. However, once inside, the bride does not forget them. With consolatory words she promises them a share in the abundant gifts which lie in store for her.

The spiritual reading of the text focuses on the spatial aspects of the Canticum-verse. Storerooms/*cellaria* are associated with other notions of locality such as garden/*hortus* and bedroom/*cubiculum*. Next, this concept of space unfolds according to the threefold interpretation of Scripture. 'Garden' denotes the historical, 'store-rooms' the tropological and 'bedroom' the anagogical message of the text. Once the exegete has embarked on dividing up his text, it is not difficult for him to go on. In a further analysis, storerooms, garden and bedroom are each in turn divided into three. The garden comprises creation, reconciliation and restoration of heaven and earth. The storeroom contains three cells in which, tropologically, discipline, nature and grace are stored away. As for the bedroom, it is the residence of the bridegroom from where he governs the universe. From that spot he judges the world in his eternal council and predestination. To that same spot he also withdraws with his loved ones to rest and relax. All one can say after this first bout of exegesis is that the explanation of the Canticum-text is marked by an increasing degree of exclusivity culminating in the anagogical end of the sermon just quoted 'Should it happen to one of you to be rapt...'

In spite of the structuring nature of the exegetical scheme, it is not a clear cut trajectory from the soul to God that is offered here. For that too many complicating factors are at work. It should be noted, for instance, that the phrase 'If anyone of you...' makes the mystical experience into a hypothetical affair. It is as if a possible rapture is likely to occur to an outsider rather than to the narrator himself. It even sounds as if the 'stranger' who tells about his glorious mystical moments is not necessarily to be trusted. Just as Bernard, in a later work, would ridicule Abelard's philosophical confidence with the Pauline words 'and returning to us he utters ineffable words which it is not lawful for a man to speak',²

² '...rediensque ad nos refert verba ineffabilia, quae non licet homini loqui', Ep. 190 I 1. Cf. 2 Corinth. 12,4: 'How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.'

repeating the same Pauline text *cum ad nos redierit*, he here seems to introduce an element of anti-climax in the rapturous setting of the sermon.

Whether this is the actual chamber about which the bride rejoices, I would not have the nerve to affirm (*non temere affirmaverim*). For there is a chamber and there is a chamber of the King since of the three places to which we have applied a threefold vision only the third one can be called peaceful. (SC 23 VI 16)

It is not so easy after all for the interpreter of the text to make the transition from God in his control-rooms to God in his place of rest. This uncertainty with regard to the final outcome sharply contrasts with the preceding attempts in the same sermon to describe the *cubiculum* by means of intrusion into the bedroom of the King and participation in the goings-on. The author's own experience is continuously referred to as a guarantee of the authenticity of the mystical events described.

Anticipating our close reading of the sermon, we may, of course, speculate that this element of hesitation is but a rhetorical device on the part of the author to keep in control of the subject-matter while at the same time lending his 'experience' a dreamlike touch. As a result, the set framework of the sermon becomes more dynamic and the outcome less predictable. In no way does the traditional schematic approach to the text guarantee automatic access to mystical results. Such expectations would be illusory and deceptive. The *non temere affirmaverim* means rather that the sermon is open-ended, the last word remaining unsaid. The main task of the different *sensus* such as the literal and the spiritual meaning and their subdivisions, is to serve as *aides mémoire*. Comprised within the *loci* of garden, storerooms and bedrooms, they stand out as beacons for the searching mind. Within the monastic context they indicate a process of forgetting as much as remembering. And this has its parallel in the vicissitudes of confidence and timidity, participation and withdrawal. Rather than producing tangible results, this memory technique³ helps first to introduce and next to shade

³ See Carruthers 1990: 33–45 for a list of *loci*—amongst which *cella*—used as store-rooms in which the *memoria* deposits images. I shall discuss the monastic memory in more detail in the introduction to Chapter Three.

the light of (over-)familiar patterns of images, enabling the author to create new and unheard of configurations.

Once more I would like to point to the fact that Bernard's technique of literary timidity is a risky affair. Surrounded by the innumerable phantasms of corporeal imagination his *dramatis persona*—i.e. the hypothetical subject of mystical experience—is presented in its attempt to emerge from the realm of the senses. What then of the author describing this course of events? His literary activities run parallel to the experience of the *dramatis persona* under description. But will he be able to overcome the threat of wild and uncoordinated images to his refined literary manoeuvres which culminate in the hesitancy of the *non temere affirmaverim*? Will his notions of space and place as the guarantees of literary coherence be sufficiently anchored in his text so as to provide backing for a mind withdrawing so adroitly?

2. Reading and writing

It is my aim now to read Sermon 23 from the beginning to the end. But how are we supposed to read it? Unlike Anselm of Canterbury Bernard does not hint at a specific way to approach his text. Anselm, for instance, tells the reader to read his Prayers and Meditations, not in turmoil, *in tumultu* but in rest, *in quiete*.⁴ Once having achieved the right state of mind, the reader is free to start and to stop where he likes. Thus the text is part of a spiral and circular process of writing and reading rather than telling a linear story. In my view Bernard's text may profit from the same method of reading. If I nevertheless start out by giving a survey of the

⁴ Preface to the *Orationes sive meditationes* (Schmitt 1968: vol II, 3): '*Orationes sive meditationes* quae subscriptae sunt, quoniam ad excitandam legentis mentis ad dei amorem vel timorem, seu ad suimet discussionem editae sunt, non sunt legendae in tumultu, sed in quiete, nec cursim et velociter, se paulatim cum intenta et morosa meditatione. Nec debet intendere lector ut quamlibet earum totam perlegat, sed quantum sentit sibi deo adiuvante valere ad accendendum affectum orandum, vel quantum illum delectat.' Cf. Pranger 1984: 469–73.

linear development of the sermon, I assume the text to be organised according to a 'curvilinear' pattern, the end in a sense being prior to the beginning:

...Or say that the end precedes the beginning,
And the end and the beginning were always there
Before the beginning and after the end.
And all is always now.⁵

Introduxit me rex in cellaria sua... Those are the opening words of the sermon. Attention should be paid to the sound of the words. First there is the full line from the Canticle which is solemnly recited only to be fragmented into single words whose recurrent use as *voces/sounds* contributes to the dynamic nature of the text. A further suggestion of movement is introduced through words such as *currere*/'to run' and *trahere*/'to draw' which had figured prominently in the two preceding sermons on the text *Trahe me post te, in odore unguentorum tuorum curremus*/Draw me behind you, we shall run in the fragrance of your ointments (Cant. 1,3). In Sermon 23 this *currere*-theme continues to function as a driving force before eventually coming to a standstill in the bedroom of the King. It is here that our running commentary finds an appropriate beginning.

⁵ T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*, *Burnt Norton*. Cf. Pierre Boulez commenting on his piece *Le Marteau sans maître*: 'C'est que j'ai toujours été frappé par l'unidimensionnalité de la musique. Jusqu'à cette période, l'oeuvre musicale avait un début et une fin: on allait d'un point à un autre dans une sorte de déroulement unique, impossible à modifier...Les pièces font partie d'un cycle; ce cycle est arrêté par un autre: je voulais manifester par là une très nette préoccupation d'une dimension autre qui circule dans l'ordonnance de l'oeuvre. Le fait qu'il y a non pas une mais plusieurs continuités, le fait que les cycles s'interpénètrent et que, dans la dernière pièce, ils s'interpénètrent à l'intérieur d'une seule pièce (la dernière pièce est un microcosme de l'oeuvre entière), cela constitue une étape importante dans une démarche qui, déjà, était un premier pas vers la brisure effective de la continuité musicale' (Boulez 1975: 85, 86). In my view this description fits precisely the way Bernard operates in Sermon 23 and elsewhere. I do not go into the question of the alleged newness of Eliot's and Boulez' 'grammar' nor do I feel competent to comment on the difference between literary and musical languages. So much is clear. Early-Christian and medieval religious literature was familiar with the 'multi-dimensionality' and the 'interpenetration' of texts (Cf. Harl 1977). It may be added that, just as in the poetry of Eliot, the musical element plays a dominant role in the Bernardine organisation of language.

The king has brought me into his storerooms. Look, where the fragrance comes from. Look, where they are running to...There is a run on the storerooms while the running is directed by the fragrance coming out of those rooms. Meanwhile the bride with her usual sagacity was the first to smell this fragrance, wishing to be introduced in His fulness. (SC 23 I 1)

There follows a short interruption consisting of some preliminary information with regard to the basic meaning of the *cellaria* which, in the monastery, are the places where the products of the fields and the gardens are stored away. This scant information is abruptly followed by a resumption of the running.

To that place they all run. Who? Those who are burning with desire. The bride runs, the young girls run. But she who has a more vehement love runs faster and arrives earlier. Upon arrival she refuses to accept not only repulsion but also hesitation. Without delay she is granted access as one of the family, as a loved one, as someone who is particularly loved and lovable. (SC 23 I 1)

In a nutshell this is what the literal reading of the text comes down to. Of course, 'literal' in this context is not to be understood as a modern (?) fidelity to the text. We are presented rather with a dramatic *mise-en-scène* of an event which receives its dynamic nucleus from the Cantic-text. Linking, as we have seen above, one Cantic-text (the *currere*/running) to another (the *Introduxit me...*), Bernard even reinforces this dynamic nature of the scene. Almost out of breath the bride storms into the room. Obviously, her visit is not an unexpected one. There is no repulsion, no hesitation or delay in admitting her. The factuality of this event is quite overwhelming. As such it sharply contrasts with the uncertain note on which the sermon ends: 'Should it happen to one of you...' Precisely who, then, is the bride, who at this glorious moment of arrival is seen to be solidly inside, but who, at the end of the sermon, is almost identified with a stranger whose identity remains more or less in the dark? In the course of our reading of the sermon this question will have to be raised time and again. Here the bride represents, quite literally, the woman at the most important moment of her existence. Fulness (*plenitudo*) and, even more appropriately, abundance (*abundantia*) are the terms which indicate her position. In no way

are either delay or rejection acceptable to her. As far as she is concerned, she has the rank and the rights of the bridegroom and his family themselves.

The density and immediateness of the event have an enormous effect on the way Bernard 'reconstructs' this passage from the Canticle. If immediate admission to the rooms of the King turns out to be reserved for the bride whereas her friends are not allowed in, this repulsion should not be seen as a mere negation and reversal of the bride's privilege. The girls do indeed have to wait outside. But the fulness and abundance of the bride's position is so strong as to have her friends share in her experience. Thus they are able to catch the echoes of the intimate events taking place in the rooms of the King.

Now in the course of the sermon Bernard transforms this dramatic situation into a rhetorical device. It is the interaction between presence and absence, fulness (*plenitudo*) and repulsion (*repulsio*) which runs through the sermon as a leitmotif. The strange interrelation between the arrival of the bride and the rejection of the other girls will be continued throughout the sermon and reappear in different configurations of acceleration and delay. Paradoxically, as the author makes progress in explaining the text under consideration *Introduxit me rex...*, the uncertainty with regard to the status of the final outcome will increase. Eventually, the glorious moment of the bride's arrival will be de-intensified in the hesitancy expressed in the 'Should it happen to one of you...' But even though the reader is left with a reflected glory of a decreasing intensity, he still remembers the power of the initial fulness and abundance. If he wants to become familiar with this Bernardine technique of literary timidity and withdrawal, he must learn to catch the reflections of (literal) speed and delay, hesitancy and triumph. Starting out in the semidarkness outside the *cellaria*, he will slowly grasp the workings of presence and absence, arrival and delay. However disguised, those pairs turn out to be the key in which the sermon is set.

What about the girls? They follow from afar. Because they are still weak, they cannot run with the same devotion as the bride, nor can they altogether imitate her desire and passion. That is why they arrive later and have to stay outside. (SC 23 I 1)

Here the separation has become a *fait accompli*. The *currere*/running, both having been accelerated and retarded, has resulted in a twofold arrival: the bride is inside and the girls are outside. It is precisely the unsatisfactory nature of this situation which causes the running secretly to be continued. *At caritas sponsae non quiescit*/but the bride's love does not rest... The bride will not forget her friends but asks them to bear both their repulsion and her absence with good humour. As far as she is concerned, she will not abuse her success and privileged position by becoming disdainful of her former companions. On the contrary. The mother, as she is suddenly called, will take care that her children share in her joy 'and there is necessarily no doubt that she will be with them through her dedicated care and love'. On the surface level the nervousness of the running and the subsequent separation have subsided and have been transformed into the quiet of the continued presence expressed in the promise of the bride to stay on with her friends, *semper esse cum illis*. This permanence is in turn clasped as it were in the arms of a *figura* whose minuscule textual dimensions are matched by its far-reaching effect on the reader's imagination.

For she ought to imitate her bridegroom who, though on his way to heaven (*petentem nimirum caelos*), yet promised his people to remain with them till the end of the world.

In spite of her progress and promotion, she will similarly never withdraw from the care, the nursing and the love for those whom she has borne in the Gospel. Never ever will she forget her own flesh and blood. (SC 23 I 1)

I would like to make two comments with regard to this passage. First, it is evident that the moment of Christ's ascension is used here as a metaphor illustrating the ambivalence of the bride's arrival. At the same time the reader, taking in this scene, remembers the ascension primarily as a historical event of an even more 'literal' nature than the Cantic-text under consideration. Yet here and now the Cantic-context comes first, enabling the author to allude to Christ's ascension rather than evoke it in the shape of a straight quotation. However true it may be in the end that the bridegroom is to be called Christ, here his identity is not revealed, the dreamlike and anonymous atmosphere forbidding identification. It goes without saying that precisely this 'anonymous' reference to

an overfamiliar fact reinforces the effect of the comparison between the bride and the ascending Christ. In a shock of recognition the bridegroom on his way up presents himself to the eye of the beholder as the real *figura* he is.

A second remark concerns the nature of the comparison. As it is, at the end of the running/*curre* there suddenly emerges the *figura* of him whose name is known but not mentioned, standing majestically with his arms spread out, embracing the universe and touching heaven and earth. The power of the image is so strong as to wipe out the comparative element. At first glance one is inclined to look at this image as at a static, Romanesque picture. Next, however, it can be seen to start moving. The in-built dynamics of the *petere* transform the image into an autonomous drama. On its way to the *cellaria* the *curre*/running runs into the bridegroom standing between heaven and earth. In fact, however, he does not stand, but is *petens nimirum caelos*, i.e. on his way to heaven. As a result, the *curre* is absorbed in this *petens*, this effort to get moving, while at the same time being continued in an unspeakable manner. This mini-drama somehow comprises the entire sermon, and in a wider context, the Bernardine discourse as such. Its molecular dimension, taking on the shape of the anonymous bridegroom, controls the rest of the sermon. Storerooms, bedrooms, palace chambers and whatever other spatial notions can be thought of, are all to be reduced to, and to be appreciated on the basis of, the *figura* of the bridegroom who is about to move. In the same image of the bridegroom on his way to heaven the theme of absence is implied. The bride's promise always to remain with her friends and not to forget them, as well as the fulness and abundance of what is going on inside the *cellaria*, keep being marked by the reality of absence and separation. That being the case, the search for permanent locations such as the *cellaria* has not become elusive nor has drama turned into tragedy. The fulness of the events inside the *cellaria* overflows, so to speak, thus transcending the bitter separation between the bride and the girls. The latter, in turn, appear to be *sans rancune*. Joyfully they cry out to the bride:

We will rejoice and be glad in you...remembering your breasts.
That means: in good faith we wait until you come, knowing
that you will return to us with full breasts. (SC 23 I 2)

As for their own chances, they realise that they are too weak now to enter. Nothing, however, prevents them from in their imagination anticipating the happiness to come. In that spirit the bride encourages them:

That is why she can be imagined to say to them: 'Rejoice and have confidence. The King has brought me into his bedchamber. You too must consider yourselves as similarly admitted. It seems as if I am the only one to be admitted, but I am not the only one to profit from it.' (SC 23 I 2)

Here the reality of rejection and the 'fantasy' of being present in the *cubiculum* vie for pride of place in the hearts of the girls. As long as we find ourselves within the context of the *litterae consequentia*, there seems to be no reason for concern about the differences between the two. For it is one and the same event which is being told, held together by one and the same *figura*. However, as we go on to observe the author, not only presenting the literal drama of the text, but also entering into its spiritual secrets, the question will rise as to the relationship between letter and spirit. What are the credentials of the author who is supposed to perform this task of further penetration into the text? Who is he and what entitles him to participate in the goings-on? What entitles him next to withdraw from it all? What does a spiritual reading of the text mean?

3. *Puppets on a string*

In the spiritual explanation of the text which follows attention remains focused on problems of space and place. As mentioned above, the *cellaria* are associated with related notions of place such as 'garden' and 'bedroom', eventually to be extended into the fields outside the bedroom which in turn take on the size of the universe.

First there is the garden which, denoting 'clear and simple history' is subdivided in creation, reconciliation and restoration. Of course, the three are interrelated and contained in the *figura* of the Redeemer. Just as a moment ago the reader was confronted with the image of the bridegroom ascending to heaven, he is here presented with a mirror-image of that same bridegroom emerging out of heaven and earth.

For in its time, when 'the heavens dropped down from above and the skies poured down the righteous one, the earth opened and brought forth the Saviour', through whom the reconciliation between heaven and earth was wrought. For 'he himself is our peace, who has made both one', 'making peace through his blood between the things on earth and the things in heaven'. (SC 23 II 4)

This passage is conspicuous for its liturgical overtones (the Isaiah-text figuring in the antiphon of Advent). In the same way that the liturgical chant resounds in the (monastic) church, the universal extension implied in the reconciliatory meeting of heaven and earth keeps being contained by the garden from which it springs. As a result, this first step in the direction of an allegorical 'amplification'—Bernard here still calls it 'history', meaning history as part of allegory—is marked by an almost material setting. Whatever flight further spiritualisation may take, it will be kept down to earth by the 'empirical', spatial context in which it moves around. Bernard, for his part, continues the agricultural metaphor when elaborating on the course of sacred history. At the end of history the products grown in the garden, the good ones separated from the bad ones, will be stored away in the *promptuaria*/*'storerooms'* of God.

So the image of the bridegroom on his way to heaven is counterbalanced, so to speak, in the *figura*⁶ of the Saviour emerging out of the dew and the soil of the garden. The person leaving being the same as the person arriving, one wonders exactly what the contours are of a place in which it is possible to arrive while departing and to leave upon arrival. ('Hello, I must be going!')

In the following passage the garden-theme is interpreted in a tropological sense. In order to be presentable the garden has to be cultivated, in terms of tropology, it has to be seen as reflecting human behaviour and relationships. Meanwhile the tone seems to have changed, the magic gone. There are no more sudden interruptions of images and scenes nor can the participants be seen running.

⁶ Although it seems inappropriate to call Christ a *figura*, there is reason to do so. Within the Cantic-text of the sermon the bridegroom is in a sense prior to Christ and thus a constitutive element in the production of his appearance. Cf. Introduction, note 19.

Yet it should be realised that the *currere*/'running' theme, once it has resounded, keeps echoing throughout the rest of the sermon, acting as a constant reminder in the mind of the reader even after the surface language has changed. As for the reader, the intensity of the images of the bridegroom's departure (ascension) and arrival has made it difficult for him to forget the main scene of the historical *sensus*: the presence of the bride inside promising her friends to take care of them. At this stage the echo-effect consists of bringing clarity to this confused situation by means of underpinning it with a social foundation that might help explain the mystery—for a mystery it is—of the separation between the bride and her friends. For it is precisely social relations which are marked by differences and separation. As such we find ourselves here in the realm of empirical knowledge. And in a sense this passage about tropology can be said to be located on the borderline between the external, empirical world and the literary form (including the literary events as they occur in the sermon). Going into the nature of 'morality' Bernard draws the external world of human relations within the confines of the 'garden' catching signals (of morality) from outside and reflecting them in the literary context of the 'garden' (and, for that matter the *cellaria*). At the same time—and that is the condition on which the mirror-effect works—he does not for one moment leave the garden, (that is, the enclosure of the literary form), or, for that matter, break through its fence.

It comes as no surprise that there should be three storerooms: one for the spices, one for the balsam, and a winecellar, three rooms making up one *cellarium*, together testifying to the abundance of grace which, tropologically speaking, takes on the figures of a servant, an equal, and a superior. That human relations have to be governed by means of discipline and constraint is a matter of course if one looks at the way society—including monastic society—is structured. There, in spite of the fact that all men are created equal, pride, ambition, and egoism flourish. In order to be able to return from this wilderness to the 'balsam' of the original state of nature, the human mind has to be tamed like spices being pulverized. After so intense a training one is entitled to one's place in the community

of men and 'live together like brethren'. Finally, the winecellar, the third storeroom, is the place where the wine is preserved representing 'fervour marked by love'.

Whoever has not yet deserved to enter in that room, should not be in charge of others. For whoever is in charge of others has to glow with wine just as the apostle of the Gentiles was glowing when he said: 'Who is weak when I myself do not feel weak? Who is scandalized, when I myself do not burn with anger?' For it would be a sign of utter presumption to be in charge of others without caring for their well-being. To demand obedience from those for whose profit one does not look, would be sheer ambition. I call this cell the cell of grace, not because the others could be entered without grace, but because of the fulness (*plenitudo*) which is to be received in that place exclusively. For 'love is the fulfilment (*plenitudo*) of the law'. And 'whoever loves his brother, has fulfilled the law'. (SC 23 III 7)

If this passage is read as an analysis of human society, and of monastic society in particular, the question rises as to the nature of hierarchical differences between men. Are those differences of a structural nature or are they part of a process in which they are gradually supposed to disappear? Does Bernard in this passage outline the contours of a static fabric of human relationships or does he provide his reader with the means to break precisely through the permanence of a hierarchical society by referring it back to the equality of its original state, or, for that matter, to the *plenitudo* of its future fulfilment? In terms of the sermon the question could be phrased as follows. What is the priority or, the posteriority of the grace which is called *plenitudo legis*, that is, the grace which is called love (*caritas*)?

Whatever the answer to that question may be, all Bernard has to offer at this stage is a rather realistic inventory of the monastic population including some practical tips for the management. There are monks, for instance, who need the austerity of discipline in order to tame their carnal and sensual desires. Obviously, this group of people is a different one from those who are able to use their free will to live together with their companions. Yet another, more exclusive group consists of the superiors who are in charge of the

others. But even their superior state can be undermined if they, unable to bear the luxury of no longer having to obey a superior themselves, start needlessly and restlessly bothering others. It would be better for them to leave their brothers alone and keep their own peace of mind satisfied with the help of the amount of grace which it pleases God to bestow on them.

In conclusion the following can be said:

I shall call that man the best morally speaking and in the fullest possession of the basic principles of that discipline to whom it is given to run (*percurrere*) through all those cells and to go round without any hindrance, who in no way resists his superiors, or envies his equals, or is lacking in care for his subordinates or treats them arrogantly...This splendid kind of perfection I should not hesitate to attribute to the bride. As a matter of fact, all this is hinted at in the text *Introduxit me rex in cellaria sua*, since the bride shows that she is not brought into one cell only but into different cells. (SC 23 III 8)

Optimum autem in moribus dixerim/I shall call that man the best morally speaking... The tropological interpretation of the text, so we have said, could be expected to produce a clear survey of human relationships. Here, however, that clarity vanishes, the unambiguous nature of the tropological *sensus* being suspended. For if it may be true that the different social attitudes outlined in the tropological section of the sermon could be identified as the different groups making up the monastic population, the author now creates a feeling of distance and uncertainty. The superior, for instance, who a moment ago might have been identified as the abbot, is suddenly referred to as the *sponsa*/bride. It is not a matter of course, however, that the abbot and the bride are one and the same person. The hypothetical element implied in the *optimum...dixerim* runs parallel to the suspense which Bernard here introduces into the text by leaving the level of clear cut human relationships sublimating it all into the as yet unidentified *figura* of the bride. As far as she is concerned, she is not to be located on one single step of the social hierarchy. The fulness and the abundance of her arrival mean that she has run through all the rooms simultaneously. Seen from this point of view, the static hierarchy of social relationships—that is, the area of tropology—has been undercut and deprived of its

schematic nomenclature. Almost unnoticed, it has been absorbed in the (running) course of the sermon and become part of the burning question which keeps it all going: who is this one and only bride and what are the implications of her absence?

Iam ad cubiculum veniamus/let us now advance to the bedroom. Here a new guest introduces himself. His arrival had already been announced rather discreetly through the use of the first person singular in the *optimum...dixerim*/I shall call him the best... Applying the tropological scheme to the Canticle-text under consideration, the expositor, who happened to be an abbot by profession, had not been able to avoid introducing himself, however subtly and modestly, as the 'caller', as the presenter of other people's qualities. Before paying attention to the complications which may arise from this situation, I would like to summarize the results of our reading. So far the sermon appeared to be structured by the *figura* of the bridegroom, who, arriving as well as going—thus setting the example for the arrival of his bride—, dominated the course of the exposition. That is not to say that the traditional exegetical schemes of *historia* and tropology had been abandoned. As we have seen, they do play an important role, be it as a rough framework right through which Bernard is spinning his subtle web. Now at the end of the tropological section, when the author is about to name the 'superior' in his own text, attention focuses on the spin. In other words, the text the analysis of which seemed to develop along regular lines, is slightly twisted so as to enable the reader to catch a glimpse of the writer's hand.⁷ Of course, Bernard can be trusted not to impose himself abruptly and in an uncivilised manner.

What about that? Do I presume to know what it means to advance to the bedroom? (SC 23 IV 9)

After the tropological analysis has appeared inconclusive with regard to the identity of the bride, the author here suddenly

⁷ To illustrate my point I am using here, by way of comparison, Escher's famous etching *Drawing Hands* (1948) in which one hand draws the other. The enclosed, almost tautological nature of Bernard's self-introduction may also be compared with Anselm's tautological analysis of self-knowledge and knowledge of God in his *Proslogion* and in his first meditation. Cf. Pranger 1984.

introduces himself as a source of ignorance. As far as he is concerned, he does not know what we are talking about.

Minime mihi tantae rei arrogo experientiam/I am the last person to know anything about the experience of so important a matter. (SC 23 IV 9)

Yet, by proclaiming his ignorance, Bernard cautiously situates himself in the proximity of the bride.

Nor do I boast of a privilege which is reserved for the bride only, keen on knowing myself, as the Greeks say, or, in the words of the Prophet, to know that in which I am deficient. (SC 23 IV 9)

As of now, following the course of the sermon, we have to take account of a third person being none other than the author, who, albeit from a distance, joins in the movements of the bride and bridegroom. But exactly where does he stand? Has he himself been inside the *cubiculum* or is he to be spotted outside as one of the young girls' crowd?

The hand of the writer thus shows itself in the text. What are the implications of this self-reference? It is, at least, possible to say what it does not mean. It is not, one-dimensionally, a matter-of-fact-like reference to the author himself. Rather the self-introduction of the writer as one of the *dramatis personae* in his own text should be considered part of the way the sermon is composed. In that process we can observe the author at work, not only drawing a picture of himself but, more subtly, almost Escher-like, drawing his own hand while drawing his own hand. He can be seen, after the seemingly 'realistic' division and subdivision of the tropology, to enter his own dream-world in which he is supposed both to control the wildness of his own imagination and to guard the fragility of the linguistic experiment he is in the process of launching.

How is this fantasy structured? Exactly what does the *figura* of the writing hand look like and whose picture besides its own does it draw?

To get a further grip on the situation, let us first return to the end of the tropological *sensus*. There the following situation presented itself. The bride who had run through all the rooms, turned out to have absorbed all previous divisions by which human society was

characterised just to appear as the culmination of superiority. Standing there as the majestic and *arrivé* figure she is, she points, not to herself, but to the bridegroom who has just left: *sponsus petens caelos*. It is in terms of the *figura* of the bridegroom that she explains the nature of her own arrival and the separation from her friends. Precisely the same *figura* is echoed by the *ego* of the author who has introduced himself in his joint capacities of expert and ignoramus. Through that move the author positions himself in the same *locus* as the bride's and bridegroom's, thus reflecting the place where the bride's arrival was marked by the sadness of separation and departure. Eventually, identifying with the bridegroom—in analogy with the bride—he stages his own person as catching the echo of the latter's (dis-)appearance: *petens caelos*.

If we connect this *figura* of the bridegroom on his way out with our image of the hand which is in the process of drawing itself etc., the Escher-metaphor can be applied in the following manner. We watch the writer writing about himself while writing. Doing so, he is no different from the *figura* he is in the process of describing. Interpreted in terms of the text under consideration *Introduxit me rex...*, this auto-drawing—or, auto-description—may be said to bear the hallmark of the *cubiculum* which as a *locus* in turn bears the hallmark of the image⁸ of the bridegroom on his way to heaven.⁹

⁸ For a more detailed analysis of Bernard's use of *loci* and *imagines* in terms of a monastic mnemo-technique, see Chapter Three.

⁹ It may be helpful to keep Escher's drawing in mind. The hand drawing the hand being drawn etc. has the enclosed shape of a *cubiculum*: both hands touch one another. Joined together they make up a circle. At the same time the picture is dynamic, suggesting the movement of the drawing hands breaking out of their self-imposed enclosure. Something is going on within this enclosure of the hands which can be compared with the activity of the bridegroom *petens caelos* while embracing the *cubiculum*. In a sense the *cubiculum* represents the bridegroom holding it while leaving, just as Bernard claims to be writing on the basis of what he knows while being ignorant. In fact, the hand of the author cannot be distinguished from the hand with which the bridegroom holds the *cubiculum*. The rest of my analysis of the sermon, and, for that matter, the rest of my book, can be seen as an attempt to present in one *figura* the aspect of the enclosed *cubiculum* containing both the bride and the bridegroom as well as the suggestion of movement represented by the bridegroom moving out of the *cubiculum* to the pastures, or, for that matter, heaven, while being held together by the hands of the author. For Bernard all these different aspects are part of one and the same image just as the viewer of Escher's lithograph takes in in one simultaneous act the different—and 'unsolvable'—aspects of the drawing

This auto-description is indeed based on ignorance. In the same way that the hand draws only itself and does not give information with regard to anything else, Bernard's self-reference in the middle of his own sermon is offering nothing new. As far as he is concerned, he knows nothing. All he can produce in the face of the famous Delphic oracle 'Know thyself' is his failure to know and to experience. However, just as Escher's hands by their touch create a moment in which visibility and invisibility meet, Bernard's ignorance is encapsulated in what he knows.

Yet if I were completely ignorant, I would not say anything. What I do know, I do not begrudge you nor do I keep it to myself. With regard to what I do not know, I pray that the teacher of men will teach it to you. (SC 23 IV 9)

As for an answer to the question of exactly what the author knows we are once more referred to the *figura* of the hands, in other words, the bride in the *cubiculum* separated from her friends, in other words, the bridegroom leaving for heaven. Bernard's description of this *figura* is to be seen as a literary imitation of it based on his own ignorance and experience. In his attempt to give an account of the bride's presence inside, and the girls' presence outside the *cubiculum*, he encircles it, taking on the posture of the girls waiting outside (cf. his ignorance) as well as of the bridegroom *petens caelos*. In literary terms that means that he holds his own text in suspense just as the bridegroom by leaving the *cubiculum* undercuts and sublimates its finality (*plenitudo*) into the as yet unknown dimensions of 'the fields where he rests at midday'. In that move it is not only the girls that are left behind, but also the bride. As a result, we find ourselves being more kept in the dark than ever with regard to her identity. Who is she and who are her friends?

hands. Not unlike the reader of Bernard's text, the viewer of Escher's drawing has to enter into the picture and identify with the author in the process of drawing or writing. Staying outside would drive him mad. If, on the other hand, one insists on solving the paradox implied in Escher's *Drawing Hands*, or, as Hofstadter calls it, the 'strange loop' or the 'tangled hierarchy' (i.e. the paradox consisting of an invisible author drawing an 'automatic' picture), an 'involute level' outside the picture has to be postulated from which one can identify with the drawing Escher (Hofstadter 1979: 689–719). In Bernard's case, however, a third party—that is, the 'real' author as different from the one figuring in the text—is excluded from the game.

On those wuthering heights of Bernard's literary experiment the uniqueness of the bride is relativised alongside the extension of the *cubiculum* into a many-faced complex of cells, and, further still, into the universe. Precisely in the dreamlike state of the *cubiculum* the number of configurations of persons arriving as well as leaving seems unlimited.

You will remember my saying to you that the *cubiculum* of the king was to be found in the secrecy of theoretical contemplation. But just as I remember having remarked with regard to the ointments, which are many in number and diverse in nature, that they are with the bridegroom, not being at everyone's disposal—rather every girl is rewarded on the basis of her merits—I do think there to be more bedrooms of the king than one. For there is more than one queen as there are numerous concubines and a countless number of girls. Everyone of them finds her own secret with the bridegroom saying: 'My secret is mine, my secret is mine' (Isaiah 24,16). And it is not given to all in one place to see the gracious and secret presence of the bridegroom, but to everyone according to what the Father has prepared for her. For we have not chosen him but he has chosen us and assigned us our place. And wheresoever one is placed by him, there one's place is. A sinful woman who showed contrition, for instance, was given a place at Jesus' feet, while another woman—if indeed she is another woman—found the fruit of her devotion at his head. Thomas acquired the grace of this secret in Jesus' loins, Peter at the bosom of the Father, Paul in the third heaven.

Which of us is able sufficiently to distinguish between those various merits—or, rather, those rewards? However, to avoid giving the impression that I pass over what I do know, I would like to point out that the first woman made room for herself in the safety of humility, the second one on the throne of hope, John in the breadth of love, Paul in the inner sanctum of wisdom, Peter in the light of truth.

That is why there are many habitations with the bride. And whether it is the queen or a concubine or one of the many girls, everyone receives a particular place in accordance with her merits, until she is at liberty to proceed to the contempla-

tion and to enter into the joy of her Lord examining the sweet mysteries of the bridegroom.

But I shall try to illustrate this in an appropriate place. Now, however, it may suffice to know that absolutely none of the girls, none of the concubines and none of the queens is given complete access to the secret bedroom of the king. That secret is exclusively reserved by the bridegroom for his one and only dove who is beautiful and perfect. That is why I do not feel completely unworthy if I myself appear not to be admitted in that room, the more so since I am convinced that meanwhile even the bride is not yet granted full access to all the secrets she wishes to know. For that reason she begs to be shown where he is pasturing and resting at midday (*Denique et flagitat indicari sibi ubi pascat, ubi cubet in meridie*). (SC 23 IV 9–10)

It becomes crystal clear that the author has not introduced the self-reference in vain. Like puppets on invisible strings he holds and moves the different persons in this passage. The air is too thin for true identity to be established, names and persons having become almost interchangeable. The bride, for instance, has suddenly disappeared—at least, as far as the name ‘bride’ is concerned—only to re-appear at the end of the paragraph as the *sponsa* asking to be shown where the bridegroom is pasturing. For the time being she is talked of as the *regina*/queen, or even, queens. Is she the same person as the *sponsa*? Yes and no. She is the anonymous bride in the plural just as there are many different locations corresponding to a diversity of women. Both the solid garden out of whose dew and soil the Saviour emerged and the fragrant *cellaria* headed by the bride are now fragmented into a wide variety of *cubicula*. There appears to be an infinite number of locations, secrets and degrees of intimacy, all of which are covered by the presence of the one and only bridegroom (wherever he may be). ‘My secret is mine, my secret is mine.’ Grace, secrets and fulfilment are allotted to all in proportion to everybody’s merits, receiving their limitation from the particular *locus et terminus* by which the recipient’s state of progression is marked. Thus Bernard once more presents the reader with a literary body which is on the move while at the same time being contained by the one and only *locus et terminus* from which all the others flow and which is, eventually, represented by the

figura of the bridegroom on his way to heaven. In doing so he sets the final limits (*locus et terminus*) to the ever expanding number of cells and the kaleidoscopic pattern of their inhabitants. In other words, the grand design of places of intimacy and grace so generously handed out by the author is at the same time marked and contained by the bridegroom on his way out, by separation and absence. It is in this *figura*, and nowhere else, that the diversity and with it the transitory nature of all the other persons and places is to be found. Not only do the inexperienced young girls suffer from this final limitation, but also the bride herself who, in her own way, is not granted full access 'until she is at liberty to proceed to the state of contemplation, and enter the joy of the Lord, examining the sweet secrets of the bridegroom'.

If we next try to assess the rhetorical structure of this passage, the parallel between the subject described, i.e. the *sponsa* and her *locus*, and the literary composition is striking. Words, names, and events are all being used in a carefully manipulated display of semantic confusion to produce the simultaneous act of arrival and departure, absence and presence, fulfilment and suspense. What is happening?

That the fulfilment of the *Introduxit me rex...* is only to be achieved by means of detours and hesitancy (*mora, cunctatio*), has been established as a matter of course at the beginning of our analysis of the sermon. Nor should one be surprised about the fact that the various forms of delay may take on the shape of the different layers of Scriptural meaning. However, if we already faced serious problems as to the question whether the tropological distinctions were to be seen as definite or preliminary, here things look even more complicated. Unlike the tropological interpretation which was, however momentarily, relatively straight and unambiguous, the anagogical/mystical reading of the text does not offer much support to a clear-cut description of the goings-on. On the one hand, the semantic framework of the Canticle (*sponsus, sponsa, regina, cubiculum*), is continued, while, on the other, the diversity of *cubacula* is illustrated through the introduction of short biblical scenes each of which can be seen as a self-contained little drama in its own right. Thus Bernard, in order to make his point concerning the diversity of merits and places, parades a number of New Testament figures: Mary Magdalene—one name for a twofold

drama—, Thomas, John, Peter and Paul. All those eminent, biblical sinners and saints converge finding rest with Jesus, 'having been brought into his *cubiculum*'. This continuation of the Cantic-setting reveals a minute crack in its framework. In a way reminiscent of the Lord's ascension, which was used earlier on to illustrate the arrival and separation of the bride, the reader of this passage is confronted with the literalness of those New Testament 'examples' (Mary, Peter, Paul...) who, as the historical figures they are, almost transcend the Cantic-setting while at the same time referring back to it. For what better fulfilment can one imagine than those historic meetings with the Lord? So much about the first complication.

The next complication follows from the first one. The continuation of the Cantic-setting suggests that the examples from the New Testament should not be taken too literally, too historically. Within the Cantic-framework they do what they are supposed to do, that is, illustrate the dreamlike diversity of the bride's habitations. As a consequence, the New Testament text is not the first object of exposition here. Rather, the monastic author brings together two sequences of texts, one from the Old (the Cantic) and the other from the New Testament (Mary, Paul...), thus creating the possibility of distinguishing between the different persons involved (*distingere varietates meritorum*). As in a puppet-show he has the biblical figures dance on the strings in his hand. Here his earlier self-reference proves to be effective. His is the right and the capacity to assign Mary, Peter, Paul and the others their places, loosely to appreciate the merits of this and that biblical person. And even the most exclusive, mystical experience the Bible tells us about cannot resist a playful relativisation: *Paulus in tertio caelo, in intimo sapientiae* where he 'has heard words which a man is not allowed to utter...' Paul too is one of the actors in the theatre of the Cantic where the stage is set by the proportions of the *cubiculum*. Accordingly, within the context of Sermon 23 on the Cantic, his rapture, however unique it may be in itself, cannot be seen as final, as a definite account of the intimate events taking place in the *cubiculum*. This can indeed be called a semantic confusion. *Tertium caelum, intimum sapientiae*, and whatever other notions of ultimate experience can be thought of, appear themselves to be confined within the *terminus* of a *locus* while at the same time exploding into as yet undiscovered horizons when the mind 'proceeds to contem-

plation and rejoices in the joy of the Lord, examining the sweet secrets of the bridegroom'.

In a way similar to the tropological interpretation, the running/*currere* here seems to come to a halt, be it on a more exclusive level than before. For, although at the tropological stage the bride has admittedly run through all the cells, now upon her entering the *cubiculum* even her limitations come to the fore. Once more the text functions as a mirror. First, Paul, Peter and the others were supposed to mirror the diversity of queens, concubines and young girls, the entire image reflecting, in its variety, the unique and privileged position of the bride. For her alone the bridegroom had reserved access to the bedroom as for his one and only dove, handsome and perfect. Next, however, the bride and her position cease to be the exclusive mirror-point. It is the sovereign bridegroom himself reserving a place for the bride to whom attention is now drawn and from whom all further reflections are to be derived.

At this stage the author picks the fruits of his self-introduction. He was the one who had identified with the bride by positioning himself in her proximity. For that reason he is now quite capable of associating his own failure to enter with that of the bride. Considering the fact that even the bride is not granted full knowledge of all the secrets of the bridegroom, he, the author, does not have to feel ashamed when being refused admission to the *cubiculum*.

That is why I myself do not feel completely unworthy if I am not admitted since I am convinced that meanwhile even the bride is not yet granted full access to all the secrets she wishes to know...

Yet this hint of resignation on the part of the author cannot be the end of our analysis. There still is a friction to be noticed between the position of the bride and that of the bridegroom, which, in my view, reflects the convergence between the subject-matter of the passage and its literary form.

Bernard's self-reference would seem to imply that he has identified not only with the bride, but also with the bridegroom who, as the ultimate *figura*, comprises the bride as well. Now, just as the diversity symbolized by the different states of the bride and her companions turns out to be covered by the bridegroom's departure, so Bernard's rhetorical composition of this passage as a

set of fast moving images runs parallel to the way the bridegroom has entered the scene only to leave it, holding the whole world in his hand. In analogy with the bridegroom absorbing the ongoing *currere* in his *figura* on its way to heaven, Bernard, who has been in control all along, sublimates the drama in which his biblical characters played their roles as puppets on a string and has it unfold in yet another piece of Cantic-theatre breaking through all previous limitations of place and space. He thus allows us to catch a glimpse of his hand drawing his hand culminating in the following image. It is the languid request of the bride to show her where 'he pastures, where he sleeps at midday' that opens up entirely new vistas, on the level both of experience and of literary description. Gone are the previous markers of place and space such as the garden, the storerooms, the wine cellars, and the bedroom. In the meantime a spectacular breakout has taken place. No longer is the bridegroom to be found in the *cubiculum*. As for him, he is staying outside in the fields, in the green pastures where he is grazing his flocks and sleeping. Evoking that image, Bernard implicitly echoes the Ur-drama of the *sponsus petens caelos*/the bridegroom on his way to heaven. Here that *figura* manifests itself in its most fragile disguise. As in a dream, the majestic figure of the ascending bridegroom holding heaven and earth in his hands has now taken on the shape of a shepherd who, more absent than ever, grazes his flocks and sleeps at midday. While he is pasturing and sleeping, the horizon of his dream is embraced by the universe itself.

4. *Further retreat*

Now that the *cubiculum* appears to have been transformed into the sleeping fields of the shepherd, any limit whatsoever to the free flow of imagination, whether of the reader or of the author, seems to have been removed. 'Inside', 'outside', cells, storerooms, palaces, fields and pastures all follow each other in rapid succession. If the reader on his part wants somehow to comprehend the kaleidoscopic sequence of those images, he has to get hold of the image-producer, that is, the author who, working and manipulating behind the scenes, has managed to turn biblical images into dreams. The author, for one, could be said to have taken literally the exclamation

of the bride to her friends: 'you must also think of being introduced in the *cubiculum* yourselves'. As a result, he is now able to tell us about his experience, not only of repulsion but also of admission:

...but hear from me how far I have come, or, at least, how far I think I have come. For what I tell you about it for your benefit should not be seen as boasting. There is a place with the bridegroom... (SC 23 IV 11)

In view of what follows this reminder by the author of his position is far from superfluous. What happens? The bride and groom gradually withdraw from the sermon, only to reappear briefly in the split second when it is given to man to see God in His rest. The very brevity of that moment, incidentally, will give rise to the general hesitancy on the part of the monastic author by which he concludes his sermon: *Quod tamen an ipsum sit de quo exsultat sponsa, non temere affirmaverim...* if that room is the one the bride is rejoicing about, I would not have the nerve to affirm... As for the Canticle-quality of this final result, it would seem that lovers could do without a 'union so far from brilliant'.

Meanwhile the setting and tone change dramatically, the poetry of the Canticle gradually being replaced by straight and harsh doctrinal language. Of course, one might expect Bernard not to abandon completely the Canticle-setting when dealing directly with doctrinal matters. But whether he will be able somehow to maintain the dream-like imagery of the absent and sleeping bridegroom, depends on his ability to contain doctrinal language within the bounds of a *cubiculum* which, in literary terms, is supposed to function as a marker in his text guaranteeing the subterranean continuity of the Canticle-setting. This ability, in turn, depends on the quality of his own incorporation in the *figura* of the shepherd/bridegroom. The principles that govern the movements of the bridegroom going hand in hand with the writer's progress, the latter's offer to tell us 'how far he has come' has to be relied upon as the only source of information available. His is the task to help us through when the severe judgments of God make their appearance and the doctrinal going gets rough.

What has happened? Underlying the peaceful image of the sleeping shepherd there appears to be a grimmer reality:

There is a place with the bridegroom whence he, as the governor of the universe, administers justice, makes his plans and imposes laws to the creation: laws, that is: weight, measure, and number. And although that place is high up and remote, it is not at all quiet. For, truly, as far as he himself is concerned, he 'governs all that with sweetness'. However, it is no less the rule of the law for all that. And in that place He does not grant rest to the contemplating mind having come that far. But in a miraculous though enjoyable way he wears out the searching and admiring mind and makes it restless. Those two aspects comprising both the enjoyment and the unrest of such a kind of contemplation, are nicely expressed by the bride when she admits that 'she is sleeping while her heart is awake'. By 'sleep' she means a feeling of rest in sweet wonder and peaceful admiration, by 'being awake' she means that she suffers the fatigue of restless curiosity and the strain of action. That is why the blessed Job said: 'When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise? And I shall again be looking forward to the evening.' Do you not feel how those words express the tendency of the holy soul sometimes and somehow to avoid troublesome sweetness, yet again to strive after sweet trouble? For he would not have said 'When shall I arise?' if he had been altogether pleased with the rest of its contemplation. But if he had been altogether displeased, he would not have resumed the expectation of the hour of rest, that is, the evening. Therefore, that place where it is in no way possible to achieve complete rest, is not the bedroom (of the King). (SC 23 IV 11)

If we try to recall the scene of the sleeping shepherd resting in the fields—the bride does not know where—we may be able to catch its echoes resounding even within the austere space of God's government. Seen from a distance, that scene seemed to consist of one indivisible image, one point on the horizon: the sleeping shepherd in the presence of his flocks. Closer inspection, however, performed here in terms of a confrontation of the image of the resting shepherd with God's governing activities, presents us with

the same scene in a dual, or bi-focal perspective.¹⁰ Besides sleeping, the shepherd is pasturing as well. Rest is as much in the air as action. Or, in terms of the running-theme of Sermon 23, the *currere* has not yet come to a complete standstill, the nervousness implied in 'the running and the drawing of the flocks' has not yet been eliminated and transformed into a state of ultimate sleep and rest. Right through the divine providence, symptoms of unrest and dissatisfaction make themselves felt. As far as the continuity of the Canticle-context is concerned, the reader can be reassured. However remote, the imagery of the Canticle is still in place. The bridegroom who had left for the fields may suddenly have turned into the severe Governor of the universe. In fact, his sleeping in the fields has been both disturbed and continued. In a subtle way the divine activities are 'punctuated' in terms of sleeping, waking and rest, so as to enable the reader to remember the shepherd's dream in the presence of clear cut divine actions. As if still contained by the integral image of the sleeping and pasturing shepherd, both action and rest mirror the latter's stature and are now expressed in the languid movements of Job.

It is striking with how much ease Bernard moves from the position of the bridegroom to that of the bride.¹¹ She too appears

¹⁰ For a further analysis of the concept of 'bi-focality', see Chapter Eight where I apply it to the *monumentum claustrum* of the Resurrection. The tomb from which Christ breaks out leaving for Galilee is compared by Bernard with the bridegroom in the Canticle leaving the *cubiculum*, drawing his flock behind him.

¹¹ This will be a recurrent theme in this book. The identity-games Bernard is playing are based on a certain interchangeability between persons in general, and between the bride and the bridegroom in particular. However, this interchangeability is not to be understood as a kind of mystical union. Rather it should be seen in terms of drama and literary performance. The underlying ratio for such an identification is the close connection in Bernard's prose between *loci* and *imagines*, places and images (see the introduction to Chapter Three). In this sermon *cubiculum* being the main theme, it is almost personified in the *figura* of the bridegroom. That very same location, which turns out to be multi-dimensional anyway (cf. its extension into the fields), is inhabited by, and almost turns into, the *figura* of the bride. Of the many examples of such an interplay of persons and places we shall come across, I mention Bernard's identification with the sinful and descending monk (Chapter Three), his identification with his deceased brother (Chapter Five), and, finally and most basically, the interchangeability between the person kissing and the person kissed in Bernard's account of the prophet Elisha's resurrection of the dead boy

to be contained, as she has been all along, in the image of the sleeping shepherd. In the disguise of Job, she reflects her lover's dreams. Doing so, she once more imitates the bridegroom on his way to heaven/*petens caelos*. He, however, is only part of that dream in order to move out of it. In the end, he is nothing but the remote ruler of the universe: *disponit omnia suaviter, disponit tamen...* What Bernard does here, is to infuse, within the image of sleep, the ultimate place of rest he is looking for with ever increasing dimensions of distance and alienation. It is not only the desire of the bride that is marked by unrest and nervousness, but also the activity of divine providence itself. Rest is the ultimate goal we are all striving for. But even the divine rule is stretched as a bow between the poles of rest and unrest. As I pointed out above, the achievement of ultimate rest depends on the skills of the monastic author in imitating the dynamics and suspension of the lovers' movements and, finally, in pinpointing the divine activities. The technical means, however, by which this goal is to be reached, consist of the introduction of *Entfernung*,¹² that is, the creation of distance and spatial extension which enable the reader both to pin down divine action and to reduce it to utter rest.

As far as the fixation of the divine actions is concerned, we do not have to wait for long. With one blow two intertwined moments are being presented as fixed forever: the divine judgment and divine mercy, in other words, predestination in full force. A gap emerges between the human and the divine that seems unbridgeable. At this point the dreamlike atmosphere and the Canticle-poetry have completely vanished, overruled as they are by the monolithic and untouchable power of the divine.

There is a place whence God watches the rational, though rejected creation. His is the immovable, most secret and most severe attention of a righteous judge, 'terrible in his doing toward the children of men'. In that place, I say, God is seen

(see the analysis of Sermon 2 on the Song of Songs and the Sermons on the Resurrection in Chapter Eight).

¹² I borrow this expression from Pierre Boulez who used it during an introduction of his piece *Repons* at the 'Donaueschinger Musiktage 1981' in order to explain the spatial and alienating effect of his musical language.

by the shuddering contemplator in his just but hidden judgment neither doing away with the evil of the rejected nor accepting what may have been good, further hardening their hearts and preventing them from feeling sorry for their sins and coming to their senses, lest their conversion force him to cure them. And all that is not without a solid and eternal reason. Evidently, it is the more horrifyingly so, as such a state of affairs stands more immovably fixed for all eternity (*immobilis fixum exstat in aeternitate*). Frightening is what we read in the Prophet concerning this matter when God speaks to his angels as follows: 'Shall I have mercy with the wicked?' And when they ask in trepidation: 'Will he not learn righteousness?', his reply is: no! And he gives a reason for this refusal: 'In the land of the saints he has done evil and he will not see the glory of the Lord' (Isaiah 26,10). (SC 23 V 12)

This is grim and cruel language compared to which Bernard's remoteness toward the crusaders stands out as an example of deeply felt compassion. How is it to be situated, in which framework does it fit? What is left of the *cubiculum* and the fields? So much is clear. This latest area of God's eternal counsel is as little entitled to the name *cubiculum* as was the place of God's providence. Admittedly, expressions such as *domus dei* and *porta caeli* (house of God, the gate of heaven) as the place of God's judgment is eventually called, do have a spatial connotation. But both places are far from being the places where dreams come true. In the first *locus* God is seen as active, in the second as angry. In neither can He be said to be at rest.

Yet, appearances notwithstanding, the tone of this passage should not be considered one-dimensionally doctrinal. Somehow we may suspect the *currere* to be continued even in the motionless description of the divine judgment as 'immovably fixed for all eternity'. The very fact that God, even in His eternal and unchangeable judgments, cannot be said to be at rest, relativizes the ultimate status of redemption and damnation and secretly evokes an on-going drama, not only in the lives of the bride, the author and the reader, but also in the inner sanctum of God's eternal council.

For the time being, however, we have to face the bitter truth of doctrinal reality and to account for the extreme toughness of this passage. No traces of any mirror-effect can be detected nor do we

catch the remote sound of echoes from the Cantic. And even the author whose clever and elegant manipulation of the characters involved in the sermon had granted him access to, and participation in, his own literary experiment, has disappeared from sight. Instead, it is God himself who plays around with the reprobate, moving them up and down on the strings in his hand, only, in the next moment, to petrify them forever in their ultimate position of utter repulsion.

*Ahi quanto a dir qual era è cosa dura
Questa selva selvaggia ed aspra e forte
Che nel pensier rinnova la paura!*

*Terribilis est locus iste,
et totius expers quietis.
Totus inhorruì,
si quando in eum raptus sum,
illam apud me replicans cum tremore sententiam:
QUIS SCIT SI DIGNUS EST AMORE AN ODIO?
Nec mirum, si titubo ego ibi,
folium utique quod vento rapitur
et stipula sicca,
ubi et maximus contemplator
suos quoque fatetur pene motos fuisse pedes,
pene fusos gressos;
et dicebat:
ZELAVI SUPER INIQUOS,
PACEM PECCATORUM VIDENS.*

That place is terrible and completely void of rest. I was totally horrified when it happened to me to be rapt in that place, remembering with trepidation the phrase: 'Who knows whether he is worthy of love or hate?' For that reason one should not be surprised if I totter there as a leaf rapt by the wind, as a dry stubble, when the great contemplator too admits that his 'feet had almost gone, his steps almost slipped', saying: 'For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.' (SC 23 V 13)

Ultimately, the granite rock of the divine hardness is also suspended on the thin thread spun by the poet. That is not to say that the Cantic-drama of the bride and bridegroom's *cubiculum* is continued here on a straight and literal level. Rather we are

reminded of the light touch by which Bernard had evoked the remote contours of the sleeping shepherd. *Folium quod vento rapitur*/a leaf rapt by the wind... In the midst of God's wrath identifying with the lightness of a leaf in the wind—another quotation from Job—the writer, who a moment ago seemed to have disappeared from his text in view of his inability to survive the divine judgment, once more introduces himself through a poetic self-reference. Thus, describing his sinful lack of substance before the anger of God in light, poetic terms, he can be seen in retrospect even to have shaped the divine toughness. Eventually, it is his poetic, defenceless presence as a leaf in the wind that, right through the overpowering fury of God, mirrors, however momentarily, the *figura* of the bridegroom on his way to heaven, of the shepherd sleeping and pasturing in the fields and of his own imitation of this *figura*, of his hand drawing his hand. All different movements in the text now coalesce: the almost frozen moment of the leaf rapt by the wind, of the feet almost gone, of the steps that have almost slipped. This moment can be seen as a moveable *cubiculum* in its own right,¹³ light and floating in the air, a result of the upward pressure exercised by the divine mercilessness: 'Who knows whether he is worthy of love or hate?' In the end, the *locus* containing this frozen moment, in being called *domus dei et porta caeli*/'house of God and gate of heaven', bears a striking resemblance to that other place of terror and holiness: the monastery:

For it is here that God is said to be feared, here that his name is holy and terrible: Indeed, 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'.¹⁴ (SC 23 V 13)

Rather than bearing the hallmark of a *cubiculum* the first place of God looked like a classroom, the second like a courtroom. There is

¹³ Here a reference to yet another Escher-lithograph could be useful. The self-portrait *Hand with Reflecting Globe* (1935) shows Escher inside a globe pressing his hand in the shape of a semi-circle against the periphery of the globe. At the same time the globe is carried (from the outside) on the fingertips of a hand which, mirroring, in the shape of another semi-circle, the hand stretched out from the inside of the globe, touches the first one and, in fact, turns out to be identical with it.

¹⁴ Cf. my analysis of Anselm's first Meditation on the divine *terror* in Pranger 1984: 469–90.

a third room, however, that may bring us closer to the place we dream of:

But there is a place where God can be seen to be truly quiet and at rest. And that, indeed, is neither the place of the judge nor the place of the master but of the bridegroom. And for me—I speak for myself since I cannot speak for others—that really is to be called the bedchamber if I were ever to be brought in. But, alas! How rare is the hour and how brief the stay! Clearly, there one comes to know ‘the mercy of the Lord from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him’. And happy is he who can say: ‘I am a companion of all those that fear thee, and of those that keep thy precepts’. Fixed stands the plan of the Lord (*stat propositum Dei*), fixed is the sentence of peace pronounced over those who fear Him, passing over their evil, and rewarding their good deeds so that not only their good but also their evil deeds ‘work together for good’. O, verily, he alone is ‘blessed unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity!’ For who is without sin? No one. ‘For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of the Lord.’ Yet, ‘Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?’...

I saw all those things and I came to understand the truth of that text: ‘Whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself since his heavenly origin preserves him.’ That heavenly origin is the eternal predestination whereby God has ‘loved his elect and given them grace in his beloved Son before the foundation of the world’. In that manner they are supposed to appear before him in his sanctuary to see his power and glory that they be ‘the fellow-heirs of him whose image they bear’. Those then I saw as if they had never sinned. And, even though they appear somehow to have committed transgressions in time, in the light of eternity such transgressions become invisible because ‘the love’ of the Father ‘covers a multitude of sins’. And calling those blessed ‘whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered’, I suddenly became so confident myself and so full of joy that the fear which I had felt in the place of horror, that is the place of the second vision, was surpassed so as to suggest to me that

I too was one of those blessed people. O, if it had only lasted!
 'Visit me' again and again, 'o Lord, with thy salvation, that I
 may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the
 gladness of thy nation.' (SC 23 VI 15)

'Who knows whether he is worthy of love or hate?' Here the immobility of the divine wrath (*fixum in aeternitate*) is mirrored in the immobility of the divine mercy (*stat propositum*). However, both serve the literary purpose of light drama creating a dreamlike atmosphere in which the author, balancing on the edge of the knife, watches himself as if blowing bubbles. In the indivisible moment that this bubble is floating in the air, the reader is granted a vision of the impossible happening. Glittering in the sun of God's mercy, sin and terror seem to have been detached from the fixed pattern of their official appearance. Consequently, they are disconnected from the fixed status of the divine judgment.

In this latest move the author has indeed come very close to the place of the bridegroom himself. In analogy with the *sponsus petens caelos*/'the bridegroom on his way to heaven', he observes himself floating in his self-blown bubble.¹⁵ For a brief moment he can be seen moving around within the space of his own vision and his dream has come true.

O si durasset!/O, if it had only lasted! The show is over, the dream is broken. As for the author, he sticks to his own technique of absence, delay and hesitancy: *absentia*, *cunctatio*, *mora*. There is not much left to be told. As if the dream of his own 'ascension' had occurred to someone else, he completes his sermon in an anti-climatic mood. The *cubiculum*, in a somewhat down-to-earth manner, is compared with the room of the King to which he withdraws to relax after a busy day's work as a judge and provider, together with those who are close to his heart and worthy to share in his rest. Then follows the passage we took as the point of departure of our analysis: 'Should it happen to anyone of you to be rapt in that place...', as well as the expression of strong reservations with regard to the question whether the location of this rapture is really identical with the *cubiculum* of the bride.

This anti-climax notwithstanding, we can still hear echoes resounding. The way in which Bernard, at the end of Sermon 23,

¹⁵ Cf. note 13.

talks about 'the experience of others' as about strangers with whom he is not familiar, the mood of alienation and remoteness, the fragility and brittleness that result from this literary abstinence, the uncertainty with regard to the final outcome, the general hesitancy: all those moments of suspense and delay point to the hand of the writer. The sermon may be completed by now, but the literary timidity used to bring about the intended effects raises ever more questions—or should we rather speak of reminiscences?—that reach beyond the limitations the author had imposed upon both himself and his reader. As for the reader, confronted with the fact that, rather than being conclusive, the text *Introduxit me rex...* mirrors a *figura* on its way out, he finds himself left behind like the disciples after the Lord's ascension. Still gazing up at the sky, he asks himself what the looking-glass may have been through which he has caught a glimpse of wonderland.

CHAPTER THREE

CONFIGURATIONS: THE TREATISE ON THE STEPS OF PRIDE AND HUMILITY

1. Places and images

In this chapter we will try to observe the *figura* of the bride and bridegroom as it materialises in the day-to-day practice of the monastic life. Recalling the image of the site as presented in the Introduction one wonders exactly where the building-complex in the wilderness and the literary imagination meet. The analysis of Sermon 23 on the Song of Songs has made it clear that the life contained by the *cubiculum* is a fragile one, marked by absence, departure and hesitancy. Applied to the monastic existence that means that the possibility of failure, however out of place from the viewpoint of the uninterrupted mechanics of the monastic rite, cannot be excluded. Within the enclosed space of the monastery a drama is being performed the successful outcome of which is far from being guaranteed by the continuity of the *laus perennis*. At the same time that very enclosure prevents the would-be sinner and non-conformist from escaping. What, then, does this place look like and what images of arrival and departure, absence and presence make sense within the walls of the monastery?

The life of the Benedictine monk is of a monumental nature. First there is the building-complex, stately and distinguished, massive and measured: the church, the cloister, the chapter, the hospice, the storerooms, the walls. Observing this complex from some distance, we gradually see this monastery embedded, *pli selon pli*, in a wider landscape: fields, woods, hills, mountains. Silence is in the air. This kind of silence, however, is not the product of nature. For that to be the case the picture bears too much the stamp of artificiality. It rather looks as if a landscape painter has been intent on lending his painting an element of still life: *nature morte*. And if we take a

closer look at the details of the painting, we even notice the bent and motionless figure of the occasional monk at work.

Neither paintings nor monks are in the habit of speaking out. Yet observing this scene we would like to know more about the 'feelings' of the tiny little figure which seems to be one with his surroundings. 'Observation' is, indeed, a key word in the mental world of the artist who has designed this scene: Benedict of Nursia. In his Rule he has taken care to register the necessity of solemn silence and, if need be, the possibility of whispering speech. When describing in his chapter on the steps of humility the highest step of the *scala humilitatis*, however, he presents a portrait rather than an analysis:

The twelfth step of humility looks as follows. The monk presents a continuous display of humility for those who watch him not only in his heart but also through his body, during the prayer hours, in the church, in the monastery, in the garden, on the road, in the fields or wherever he sits, walks or stands, his head continuously bent and his looks directed to the ground. Considering himself permanently guilty because of his sins he pictures himself as having to appear already before the frightful judgment, repeating all the time in his heart, looking down, the words of the publican in the Gospel: 'Lord, I, a sinner, am not worthy to raise my eyes to heaven' and, as the Prophet says: 'I am continually bent and humiliated'. (*Regula Benedicti* c. 7)

'Always, always', *semper, semper...* sound like the final words, dying away, of Mahler's *Lied von der Erde: ewig, ewig...* The monk who has reached the highest degree of humility is entitled to coincide with his portrait in order to have himself immortalized, *ewig...* Or, to put it in terms of our painting, the bent figure in the fields has himself become a monument.

What are the implications of so intense a picture? The least which can be said is that a technique, or, more precisely, a mnemotechnique, is being used here to bring about the desired effect. The workings of the painting under consideration appear to be based on memory training.

The first step of humility supposes the monk permanently to have before his eyes the fear of God, altogether fleeing

oblivion and always remembering the commands of God.
(*Regula Benedicti* c. 7)

The combination of terms is striking: fear, oblivion, remembrance, always... (*timor, oblivio, memor, semper*). Obviously, this cluster of terms is part of a technical procedure rather than the indication of a mental-psychological state of affairs. Fear of God, for example, should not be seen as undirected anxiety or terror. It functions rather as a kind of nervousness which anticipates the outcome of the journey ahead: love (*caritas*) which banishes fear. It is this very love which sparks off the process in which—through memory—fear is brought to the mind's surface. The very linkage of fear (*timor*), as the starting-point, to the end of the journey, love (*caritas*), further determines the special nature of monastic oblivion (*oblivio*). First and foremost it is to be viewed as oblivion of God. Next, in view of the monastery as representing the divine order, this mode of forgetting, when expressed on a more comprehensible level, might be translated as oblivion of the monastic complex. Whosoever, hitting the road of humility, refuses to observe the fear of God, forgets and deceives himself. Such a person is not prepared to acquire the technical skills by which he would be able to distinguish reality from what it appears to be. He is willingly heading towards oblivion. As a consequence, his life is full of sheer emptiness. Diametrically opposed to this manifestation of oblivion is the memory training (*semper memor*) which produces real art. Climbing the ladder of monastic exercises step by step through a permanent remembrance of the commands of God, in spatial terms: imagining the meaning of the various sites of the monastic complex, the monk, wherever he finds himself, is able to achieve a state of perfect love which banishes fear. As a result, 'as by a natural habit he starts keeping all the rules and commands which up till that moment he did not observe without fear.' The *semper memor* has turned into a habit, technical skills have become customary, artificiality is no longer distinguishable from nature.

In opere dei, in oratorio, in monasterio, in horto, in via, in agro vel ubicumque sedens ambulans vel stans...

The spectator's gaze is not drawn to locations outside the monastic complex in order to witness the monk abandoning his own will and conforming to the order of divine love. Neither a Mount Thabor, nor

a Monte Alverna, nor a hermitage nor even a 'dark night' provide the setting for the *scala* of humility. The setting is the recognisable space within which the drama of monastic life is realised. In this respect, too, the Benedictine world is of a monumental nature.

The effect of the conflation of the monumental and the natural aspects of the environment on the way monastic life is run is remarkable. The readings from the Rule during the meals which touch the monk's ear do not just provide technical instructions about his ideal behaviour. They also describe an actual state of affairs. Consequently, there is not, or there cannot be, a discrepancy between life as it is and life as it ought to be. Of course, that does not preclude the possibility of a monk not conforming or not living up to the high standard of his profession. But that is not what counts. The technicalities of the instructions once put into effect—rhetorically speaking, once recited—inevitably maintain the full swing of monastic life. If there is any discrepancy between what is being read and the monk who is at the receiving end of that reading it is a certain dissimultaneity. Apart from the chapters on food and drink the Rule does not relate the kind of activities the monk is engaged in at the very moment he hears the Rule recited. The authority of the abbot, the divine hours, manual labour, all issues dealt with in the Rule, take place at moments which do not coincide with the lecture hour. It is this friction which conditions the memory technique used by the Benedictine monk. The main features of this technique are the following:

A. The Rule of Benedict offers a complete description of both the real estate of monastic society and the personal life lived in those *immeubles*. Yet freedom of movement is not lacking. There is plenty of opportunity for the monk to take devotional initiatives, i.e. to put into practice the real intentions of the Rule: the realisation of a full and perfect life. During that process the Rule is being used as an aide-mémoire to help the monk progress on his way up.

B. The Rule is not organised according to a strictly linear, logical pattern. Admittedly, related subjects are being brought together. But that does not make them part of a linear narrative. On the contrary. Further fragmentation occurs within the closed-off, perfect way of life of the monk when, during his meals, he hears passages recited

which are in some way related to the different aspects of his existence. While eating in silence, he is physically touched by the words being read out from the pulpit reminding him of the life he is living and is destined to live. Accordingly, the main task of the Rule is not to teach the monk his duties, but to familiarise him with the code contained in the Rule, and with the code-like words which bring to life the silent space of the *claustrum*.

Within the *claustrum* there are different *loci*/places: the church, the cloister, the refectory, the garden, the roads, the fields which by nature of their familiarity enable the monk to attach images to places: the praying, the reading, the eating, the working, the bent monk. The permanence, however, of the last figure, the bent (*incurvatus*) monk, cuts right through the supposedly fixed order of this memory technique. *Semper memor*. And so we are back where we started: at the motionless painting of the monastic complex. Somehow this painting contains the key to the monastic code. But in view of the surrounding silence, how is this code to be articulated?

What does the code look like? First, it is a correspondence, or even a coincidence between the commands of the Rule and the actual behaviour of the monk. In other words, 'one lives as one reads' *es ist möglich so zu leben wie man liest*. Seeing the matter that way is based, however, on an external point of view. For the monk himself things look different. His knowledge of the Rule is more than complete. He can recite it backwards. In being literally the embodiment of the Rule he has become part of it. It is this (over-)familiarity, this naturalness which enables his mind to be touched by the inbuilt points of recognition in his environment and it is precisely there that the play of imagination begins.

Viewed against the backdrop of Benedictine life Bernard's treatise *De gradibus humilitatis et superbiae* might be seen as a running commentary on chapter seven of the Rule (the chapter on humility). Within this context 'backdrop' is of more than secondary importance. It marks the coincidence between the natural environment of working and living on the one hand, and the special dimension of an attitude which is at once acquired and become habitual on the other. This habit, in turn, results from an intensive process of exercise in the steps of humility. The fact, however, that despite

appearances, both the external and the internal dimensions of monastic life are artifacts made by human hands and minds rather than representing pure nature leaves room for manipulation. It is in this oblique aspect caused by the artificial nature of the monastic environment that there emerges the possibility for comment. The fixed outlook of the surroundings, architectural as well as literary, allows an infinite number of configurations; a chance which would be utterly missed if one were to be living in an environment complex by its nature. Just as the complexities of James Joyce's *Ulysses* are clearly structured and held together by the rather simple—even dramatically and consciously provincial—pattern of Dublin, the monastic site lends itself to dreams, to the *Reise ins Paradies*. A structureless and labyrinth-like city like Los Angeles would offer imagination as little chance of vagary as the labyrinthine library in Eco's *The Name of the Rose*. Admittedly, a labyrinth in the literal sense of the word works in a detective story which, after all, stands in need of a solution, and therefore, has to have a plot. Part of its charm is the illusion that reality, and its darker aspects in particular, can be mastered, or, semiotically speaking, decoded. Joyce and Bernard, however, are more ambitious. They require their locations to be the carriers of possibly infinite configurations and, therefore, to be simple. In Bernard's case—supposing the commentator of the Rule to be a Benedictine—the latter simultaneously plays the role of an inhabitant of the monastic complex and of its designer and builder while, on the spot, bringing to perfection the endless, 'imperfect' implications of the Rule.

This Benedictine design, sketched here in rough outline, is reflected in the structure of *De gradibus*. As a commentary on the Rule the latter's presence remains recognisable. The exuberance of images produced by Bernard in the course of his commentary are bound together and made transparent by being fitted into a pattern of places (*loci*). These very same *loci* also function as images and are thus drawn into the dynamics of the drama for which they provide the setting.

The complex nature of *De gradibus*, just like its Ur-model, the Rule, prevents it from being read from beginning to end as a

logically structured composition. Rather than grasping the unfolding of a linear story, the reader ought to be concerned with catching the sparks resulting from the confrontation between fast moving images and massive *loci* seemingly fixed forever.

2. *Downhill all the way*

Let us first look at the Preface. Here the main elements of Benedictine monumentality are presented. Staying within the framework of the painting one asks: how can Bernard describe this monumentality without ceasing to be part of it? On the other hand, what is his position as a creative writer within a context out of which the discontinuous and the unexpected—generally acknowledged as requirements for creativity—are banned?

Requested by a certain Godfrey to record in writing the commentary on the steps of humility which he had delivered orally Bernard gives the following reply. He would not dare to undertake so important an enterprise without first having 'counted if he had sufficient means at his disposal' properly to meet the request.

However, after love had banished the fear which, so I feared, would leave me in derision if I would have left the work unfinished, I was struck by another fear that the opposite might happen. That fear made me worry more about the danger threatening me as a result of the glory which I would earn by completing the job than about the shame which would be my part if I did not. Caught between fear and love I hesitated for a long time—as if standing on crossroads—wondering which of the two ways was to be trusted most. On the one hand, I feared that by speaking out efficiently about humility I myself would not be found humble, on the other hand, that I would be inefficient by humbly keeping silent. Realising that neither option was without a risk and that a choice had to be made, I took the decision as far as it is in my ability to have you share the fruit of my speech rather than cherishing myself all on my own in the haven of silence. (Hum praef.; Evans 1987: 101–2)

Clearly, the modesty topos is in full force here informing the reader about the extent of the author's efforts to impress his audience with

his rhetorical skills. But there is more. Apart from functioning in a traditional way as a literary common-place, the notions of modesty and humility have a monastic ring about them: fear (*timor*), humility (*humilitas*), love (*caritas*), silence (*silentium*). Whatever Bernard has to say with regard to humility will have to be viewed within this context. This special application of monastic connotations to literary concepts and *vice versa*, considerably complicates the discourse and widens the scope of the commentator's game. Bernard's procedure of shading a prefabricated literary expression such as the modesty topos with colours—fear, love, silence—taken from the Rule's literary corpus with its equally fixed nature might seem to weaken the original power of the topos. Instead, this very combination causes the (over-)familiarity of the monastic code to be evoked afresh while at the same time functioning as a starting point for meditative fragmentation. Just as in drama tragedy and death only make sense within the fixed setting of the stage, the monastic complex offers the opportunity for imagination to consider the fantastic possibility of its own world breaking down.

The way in which Bernard makes allusions to the monastic context appeals to an emotional sympathy of the reader with the 'harbour of silence'. Not for one moment does that same reader forget the artificial nature of this silence. He knows very well that it is words, in this case Bernard's words, which are supposed to realise the coming about of monastic silence. Finding himself caught in this paradox of speech and silence he is quite willing to yield to the spell of magic created by combinations of familiar *loci* and *imagines* which are as yet unknown. In his preface the author had introduced himself as an acrobat. Though fully knowing in advance the ingredients and the outcome of the latter's act, the spectator looks forward to the delights of suspense which are no less part of the intended effect of the act than the sense of relief resulting from its successful completion.

The treatise *De gradibus superbiae et humilitatis* consists of two parts, the first dealing with humility, the second with pride. In both parts the mystical ladder, the *scala Iacob*, plays an important role, though more explicitly so in the second than in the first. Depending on the state of mind of the climber, it provides the opportunity either to ascend or to descend. Yet the image of the ladder does not

intrinsically dominate the structure of the treatise. Nor does the fact that Bernard closely follows Benedict in describing the steps of humility and pride imply that the treatise is organised accordingly. At first sight there emerges no structure at all. Instead, the reader's first impression is that he is presented with a mixture of loosely connected fragments, reflections, incidental remarks and portraits. Consequently, rather than looking for a structure of the treatise, it makes more sense to try to discover the principle of organisation (and manipulation) underlying the looseness of Bernard's language. More could thus be learned with regard to the memory code contained in this language which governs the process of recognition on the part of the listening and reading monk.

The essential features of the memory code have been outlined above. Images are attached to existing *loci* against the backdrop of silence and rest. Tracing this procedure in the text of Bernard, 'the harbour of silence' was the first to indicate the key in which the treatise was set. As if a bell has tolled we may catch the echo of those opening words when, a number of chapters later, on the top of the ladder where humility has reached its peak there is 'silence in heaven for a short time, half an hour'.

The King has led me in his bedchamber (Canticle 1,3). She [the bride] has become worthy to enter because of what she has learned in the school of humility where the Son was her teacher...She has become worthy, because of what she learned in the school of humility, to be led in love by the Holy Spirit to where charity is stored...There...she is admitted at last to the King's chamber, for whose love she languishes. There for a short time, half an hour, while there is silence in heaven, she sleeps sweetly and at peace in that longed-for embrace.¹ But her mind is alert, and it is filled with the secrets of truth on which she will feed in memory when she comes to herself. There she sees things invisible, hears the ineffable, which no man can utter (2 Corinth. 12,4). (Hum VII 21; Evans 1987: 118)

¹ For the Gregorian background of sleep, silence and the *dimidia hora* from Revelation 8, 1, see Zinn 1986a, Gilson 1947: 128.

This passage is like an unruffled pond. The silence in heaven sounds like a continuation of the 'harbour of silence' from the Preface. Here God admits the soul to his own presence and brings it to rest after it has run its course and passed through the different stages of truth. Access to this high state is possible since truth intrinsically reflects the trinitarian structure of God. Truth, in its turn, is the culmination point of humility, the goal which can be reached through exercise, i.e. through observing the ascending order of the steps of humility.

When in the second part of the treatise Bernard lightly and sarcastically describes the process of reaching this high state in terms of descent, he seems far removed from the intimacy of the present scene. Yet the simple pattern of step by step ascent and descent allows for considerable freedom of movement—even for the freedom to move away from the final goal instead of coming as close as possible; hence the above mentioned loose organisation of the different themes under consideration. One of the reasons for this looseness lies in the fact that it is after all not the gradual element as such which determines the train of thought. Behind the metaphor of the ladder hide, so to speak, the rest and silence from the Preface, the unruffled pond, the state of perfection to be reached by the monk on the highest step of humility.

Seen from the perspective of the top of the ladder the predominance of perfection and silence, in spite of the monastic efforts to keep climbing, even seems eventually to exclude the gradual aspect of the process. How does one throw a stone into this pond at rest? If it is the *ascensio*, the *scala Iacob*, known to both Benedict and Bernard, which represents the healthy unrest which leads to ascent, how does it stand up against the pervasive power of rest and silence? Indeed, the *scala* represents unrest and movement. But it does not coincide with it, just as the literary pattern of the step-by-step ascent does not coincide with the achievement of humility. For that the metaphor of the *scala* is too artificial and too dependent on the dynamics of its two extreme parts, utter chaos and utter perfection. This being the case the question arises as to the status of the steps. What do they represent, what exactly happens in between the two poles of misery and blessedness, what is the subsistence of a step?

In spite of Bernard's loyal imitation of Benedict his appreciation of the gradual element differs from the latter's. Of course, both Benedict and Bernard are in complete agreement as far as the necessity of ascent on the ladder of humility is concerned. Humility is a virtue, so Benedict says, through which man debases himself in true knowledge. And neither Benedict nor Bernard doubts for a moment that this 'debasement' ought to be realised through a process of ascent and descent.

Therefore, brethren, if we wish to get to the summit of the highest humility and if we wish to come to that celestial exaltation which is to be reached by means of ascension through humility in the present life, that ladder has to be erected through our acts of ascension which has appeared to Jacob in his dream through which descending and ascending angels were shown to him. There is no doubt that by descension and ascension we mean 'to descend in exaltation and to ascend in humility'.²

Now through an infinitesimal incision in this simple scene of ascent and descent Bernard introduces a radically new dimension. In a sense he draws the logical conclusion from the fact that the Benedictine monk simultaneously both ascends and descends on the ladder of humility. The Benedictine scheme, in fact, leaves the two extremes of the ladder 'unsolved' for it does not specify the exact meaning of 'up' and 'down'. Bernard, on his part, chooses to bring the two extremes together by confronting them. The lowest degree

² *Regula*, c. 7. There is a certain ambiguity in Benedict's use of the *scala Iacob* which dates back to early Christian times. In the Genesis text (chapter 28) Jacob watches the angels going up and coming down without himself being part of the scene. Man, being *terra*, as Bernard will point out shortly, and not possessing the lightness of the angels, only profits from going up. Descent inevitably carries the connotation of evil and sin. In a kind of osmosis between the two themes, the dynamics of the angels going up and down on the one hand, and the necessity for sinful man exclusively to ascend on the other, the metaphor has received its traditional outlook. Cf. Dronke 1984b: 7 with regard to the use of the *scala Iacob* in the *Passio Perpetuae*. 'Jacob himself does not mount his ladder—it is angels who go up and come down on it, revealing a normally invisible communication between heaven and earth. Yahweh leans over the top of that ladder, offering Jacob earthly prosperity. Perpetua's ladder, by contrast, is one that she must climb; it is a means of ascent only, not descent.'

of pride mirrors precisely the highest degree of humility. Thus within the silence and rest of the monastery Bernard makes room for the other side of the coin, for the way down, the *descensio*, along the steps of pride, the possibility of failure. Of course, it is up to the reader, or, performer, of Bernard's text to decide to which extent this possibility of failure should be taken seriously. In principle, the mechanics of monastic life do not allow for interruption, change of direction, that is, for whatever form of failure. If at all, descent only exists inasmuch as it is an imitation of ascent, a *negatio boni*. Yet the very inclusion of the way down in the way up offers Bernard a unique chance to bring out the role of evil and failure in the process of ascent and descent. Unlike man's situation in the world, the diffuse nature of which prevents the monk from 'materially' locating evil as a *negatio boni*, the monastic environment is well-equipped to bring to life the shadow of death as its natural counterpart, i.e. as the fiction it actually is. If a threat of failure remains, it is in the risk the author runs if, in the face of the hypothetical nature of evil, he is unable sufficiently to maintain the distance between success and failure, life and death, in sum, in the risk he runs of breaking down in the middle of the game.³ If he fails it is because he appears not to possess the special, literary skills required to keep the monastic process going while simultaneously undercutting it.

Bernard's double-edged image of Benedict's *scala* might be expressed in the following scheme:

³ Bernard's rhetorical gambling somehow reminds one of Dostoevsky's search 'for clarity through crisis' (as John Jones puts it): 'I ask, what does Dostoevsky's gambling mania aspire towards? And I answer, breaking the bank of all banks, busting Plato's very Idea of a bank—but absolutely: body, mind, immortal soul: in fact the Dostoevsky's apocalypse where all shall be revealed, where crisis *is* clarity' (Jones 1983: 260).

	BENEDICT	BERNARD	
(1)	<i>timor domini</i> fear of the Lord	<i>consuetudo peccandi</i> habitual sin	(12)
(2)	<i>non voluntas sua</i> renunciation of one's own will	<i>libertas peccandi</i> the freedom to sin	(11)
(3)	<i>oboedientia maiori</i> obedience to superiors	<i>rebellio</i> rebellion	(10)
(4)	<i>in ipsa oboedientia</i> suffering injustice	<i>simulata confessio</i> insincere confession	(9)
(5)	<i>humilis confessio</i> humble confession to the abbot	<i>defensio peccatorum</i> justification of sins	(8)
(6)	<i>omni vilitate contentus</i> reduction to nothing	<i>praesumptio</i> presumption	(7)
(7)	<i>inferior omnibus</i> holding oneself inferior to all	<i>arrogantia</i> arrogance	(6)
(8)	<i>nisi regula vel</i> <i>exempla maiorum</i> exclusive observance of the Rule	<i>singularitas</i> singularity	(5)
(9)	<i>taciturnitas</i> taciturnity	<i>iactantia</i> boasting	(4)
(10)	<i>non facilis in risu</i> slow to laugh	<i>inepta laetitia</i> inappropriate merriness	(3)
(11)	<i>pauca verba</i> economic with words	<i>levitas animi</i> light-mindedness	(2)
(12)	<i>caritas quae foris</i> <i>mittit timorem</i> love which banishes fear	<i>curiositas</i> curiosity ⁴	(1)

⁴ See Bernard's own remark on the correspondence between the steps of pride and the steps of humility: 'Compare if you will these two stages of pride with the last two steps of humility and see whether the last does not quell pride and the last but one light-mindedness. You will find that the same is true for the rest, if you compare one with another' (Hum XI 39; Evans 1987: 131).

The introduction of evil in the process of climbing makes the Benedictine monastery look less monumental or massive. As such the *ordo*, the rhythm of the hours, the automatics of spiritual life are not interrupted. Yet this very continuity is shown in its fragility when placed against the backdrop of the inevitable result of descension: pride as utter denial and reversal of the monastic complex resulting in final death. As long as one stays on the ladder, the illusion prevails that the dynamics of ascent and descent are without end. Properly speaking, however, the two extremes—cf. the two pairs *caritas* and *timor dei*, *curiositas* and *consuetudo peccandi*⁵—though being part of the same ladder, are not simply degrees or steps but states. It is in the confrontation between the two invisible states, the silence of rest and the silence of death, that the driving force of the treatise *De gradibus* is to be found. Pride hypostatized and death as the caricature of love cause ruffles in the pond, in the harbour of silence. At the same time those ruffles of descent indicate the design of ascent and return. The steps of humility do, indeed, make sense. Constituting the uninterrupted occupation of the monastic mind they appear to be rooted in a drama of silence and death the finality of which they are supposed to express in a never ending process of ups and downs.

Admittedly, what has been said so far with regard to the composition of the treatise *De gradibus superbiae et humilitatis* is part of our analysis of the text. For the sake of that analysis two features have been isolated from their immediate context: the mystical silence of the *dimidia hora*, the half hour, figuring in the first part of the treatise, and death as the final consequence of pride, figuring in the second part. As far as their location is concerned, both elements are somehow beyond good and evil in that they no longer fit in with any scheme of *ascensio* and *descensio*. This being said many problems remain unsolved. For what is the precise relation-

⁵ In fact there is a chiasmic correspondence between the four extremes. Benedict's *timor domini* (first step) corresponds, when compared with Bernard's reversed order of *descensio*, to Bernard's first step, the *curiositas*, and Bernard's *consuetudo peccandi* (twelfth step) to Benedict's twelfth step, the *caritas quae foris mittit timorem*. The other steps of Benedictine *ascensio* are more directly opposed to their Bernardine counterparts, of course in the reversed order (1 > 12, 2 > 11 etc.).

ship between ascent and descent? What is the relationship between the problem of mounting the mystical ladder as such and the states of blessedness and damnation which, each in its own way being the extreme point of the ladder, have ceased intrinsically to be part of it?

Tentatively, one could say the following. In one way or another the treatise is dominated by the exceptional nature of mystical slumber and death both of which, as we have pointed out, should be called states rather than steps. On the one hand there is the road towards goodness and salvation marked by the extraordinary sweetness of its goal. Logically speaking, the next step would be to say: on the other hand, there is the road towards evil, and thus the argument would be expected to move on offering the reader the choice between the two and urging him to choose rightly. Strictly speaking, however, an 'on the other hand' does not exist. For Bernard ascent and descent are two sides of the same coin. How then does one manage to perform the act of simultaneously ascending and descending along the same ladder? Precisely what role do descent and pride play when they appear to be so inextricably intertwined with ascent and humility? Whatever can be said with regard to those questions, this much is clear. In view of a basic ambiguity resulting from the coincidence of ascent and descent—an ambiguity at least in the eyes of the outsider—it is impossible to present a straight record of the monk's progress. On whatever step of the ladder the monk finds himself on his way up, his caricature laughs in his face when he looks back into the mirror of his own progress, just to watch himself tumbling down.

What does Bernard's description of the monastic *descensio* look like? At first sight the structural element of the *scala* is hardly prominent. The second part of the treatise is dealing with pride resembles a collection of portraits, *caractères*, rather than a well organized discourse. With biting sarcasm Bernard brilliantly parades a number of monks in the recognisable guise of silly sinners. It is all most amusing and if a structural development can be detected it consists of a psychology of deterioration. Once illegitimately embarked on the road of descent, the monk falls victim to the logic of sin. Consequently, he is bound to end up in the worst possible circumstances. The first step down, curiosity, already contains the seeds of the last one, habitual sin. In between, the other steps, light-

mindfulness, foolish merriment, boasting, trying to be different, arrogance, presumption, self-justification, insincere confession and the freedom to sin offer as many opportunities for Bernard to present sin in the monastery as the empty travesty of solid good it is. That monk is curious, for example, who is prone to lose self-control. He turns himself into a parody of the solemn monastic environment. No wonder that his silliness emerges from his physical movements.

Wherever he stands, walks, sits, his eyes begin to wander. His head is lifted. His eyes are alert. You can tell from his lack of control over the way he moves that he has changed. That clearly is a symptom of the illness which is about to invade his soul. (Hum X 28; cf. Evans 1987: 123⁶)

In a vain attempt to stop the downfall of his fellow-monk, Bernard rhetorically tries to catch the latter's attention thus trying to deflect him from his fateful course:

Listen to Salomon, curious man; listen to the words of the Wise Man, silly: 'Guard your heart with all your might' (Prv 4,23),⁷ so that all your senses may be awake to guard the origin of life which deserves to be guarded. For where will you go, curious man, when you desert yourself? In whom will you put your trust in the meantime? Do you dare to lift your eyes to heaven when you have sinned against heaven? Look at the earth and know yourself. She will show you what you are. For 'dust you are and to dust you shall return' (Gn 3,19). (Hum X 28; cf. Evans 1987: 123–4)

The light-mindedness resulting from curiosity shows the monk as socially undirected and chaotic. Instead of sticking to a fixed pattern of behaviour he starts looking around nervously, judging people on the basis of his own inconsistent state of mind. Some he appreciates as superior, others he despises as inferior, some he envies and others he holds in ridicule.

⁶ 'Cf. Evans' means that I have used Evans' translation slightly altering it.

⁷ Since I use Evans' translation of *De gradibus*, I also maintain her way of referring to biblical quotations.

Thus it is that the light-minded follow their roving eyes and, no longer pinned down by proper responsibility, are now swept up to heights by pride, now cast down into the depths by envy. Now the man is consumed by foolish envy; now he grows childishly pleased about his own excellence. In one mood he is wicked, in the other vain. In both he shows himself to be proud, because he makes it a matter for self-congratulation both when he grieves to be outdone and when he is pleased to outdo others. He displays these changes of mood in his speech: Now his words are few and grudging; now numerous and trivial; now he is laughing; now he is depressed; but there is never any reason for his mood. (Hum XI 39; Evans 1987: 131)

From the combination of curiosity and light-mindedness springs the third step of pride: foolish merriment. The success of others makes our monk even more impatient and restless than he already was. His main wish would be altogether to ignore the merits of others, thus bringing himself into a state of boundless joy. Bernard's psychological analysis of such behaviour is sharp and relentless. Behind this display of unchecked joy hides a fear of sadness. The merry monk, in fact, refuses to admit being upset by the superiority of others. To avoid having to be honest to himself he takes refuge in false consolations. Others he watches selectively, ignoring their superior happiness in order to avoid his own sadness and to guarantee continuation of his own empty merriness.

And so it comes about that anyone who continues to juggle joy and sorrow can enjoy an empty happiness. This is the third step. Note the signs, which you can recognize in yourself or in anyone else. You will rarely or never see in such a man any signs of groans or tears. You would think to look at him that he was not giving himself a thought, or that he had no sin on his conscience, or that he was purged of his sins. He makes scurrilous gestures. He giggles. He preens himself. He is always joking and ready to laugh at the slightest thing. If anything has happened which would bring contempt on him or cast him down, he wipes it from his memory. And if he notes any good things in himself he will add them up and parade them before his mind's eye. He thinks only of what he wants and he does not ask himself whether he ought to want it. At

times he is seized by fits of laughter; he is unable to suppress his foolish mirth. He is like a blown-up bladder which has been punctured and squeezed. As it goes down it squeaks, and the air does not come out everywhere but whistles through the little hole in a series of shrieks. So, the monk who fills his heart with vain and scurrilous thoughts cannot let them out all at once because of the rule of silence, so they burst out at odd moments in giggles. Often he hides his face for shame, purses his lips, clenches his teeth. He still cannot stop laughing and giggling. When he puts his hand in front of his mouth the giggles can still be heard popping out through his nose. (Hum XII 40; Evans 1987: 131–2)

The stream of words resulting from light-mindedness cannot be stopped any longer. Whereas at the third step Bernard still evoked monastic notions as ‘silence’ and ‘memory’ contrasting them with the emptyheadedness of the descending monk, on the next step monastic silence—and order—have disappeared from sight altogether. It is sheer loquacity which dominates the scene. The bladder which had swollen dangerously in the last chapter, is about to burst on the next step: boasting.

For he is full of talk and the spirit is straining to get out. He hungers and thirsts for listeners to whom he can make empty boasts, to whom he can pour out all he feels, and whom he can tell what he is and how great he is. He finds an occasion to speak. Let us say the subject is literature. He says new things and old. His opinions fly about. His words tumble over one another. He butts in before he is asked. He does not answer other people’s questions. He asks the questions himself and he answers them, and he cuts off anyone who tries to speak. When the bell rings for the end of the discussion, even though it has been a long one, he asks for a little more time...

If the subject is religion, at once he has dreams and visions to offer. Then he praises fasting, commends vigils, enthuses above all about prayer. He discusses patience, humility, and all the other virtues at great length, but in utter emptiness. Yet if you were to hear him, you would say that he ‘speaks from the fulness of his heart’ (Mt 12,34), or ‘A good man brings forth good things from his good treasure’(Mt 12,35). If he turns to

lighter things, he is discovered to be even more talkative, because this is something he really knows about. You would say if you heard him that his mouth was a stream of vanity, a river of scurrility, so that he stirs even solemn and grave minds to merriment. And to cut a long story short, 'When there is much talk there is much boasting' (Prv 10,19). (Hum XIII 41; Evans 1987: 132-3)

The monk who has improperly broken monastic silence, apart from having committed a serious sin, finds himself in the process of alienating himself from his community. If speech is no longer part of a socio-liturgical environment in which it makes sense, it risks being reduced to the absurd situation of 'singularity'. The descending monk although pretending to communicate by word and gestures, talks in fact only to himself. The emptiness of his speech proves him to be void of structure and meaning. The absence of any sense of proportion makes him behave in a peculiar way. In order to attract the attention of the others to his own foolish self he leaves no method untried:

He prides himself more on fasting for one day when the others are feasting than on fasting for seven days with the others. One special little prayer seems to him finer than a night spent in singing psalms. During a meal he often looks up and down the table to see if anyone is eating less than he, and then he grieves at being outdone and begins cruelly to deprive himself even of what he used to think it necessary to eat, for he fears a blow to his reputation more than the pangs of hunger. If he sees anyone thinner and paler than he is, he despises himself and cannot rest. And though he cannot see his own face he wonders what others think of it, and he looks at his hands and arms, which he can see, feels his ribs, and inspects his shoulders and thighs so as to test the pallour or colour of his face from that of his members. He is very anxious to perform his own special exercises and lazy about performing the common ones everyone does. He lies awake in his bed and sleeps when he is in the choir. When the others wake to sing the psalms of the night office he sleeps on all night. When the

others are resting in the cloister he stays behind by himself to pray in the chapel. By coughing and groaning and sighing he makes sure that those outside can hear that he is there in his corner. (Hum XIV 42; Evans 1987: 133–4)

Downhill all the way. The next two steps very much tell the same sad story, be it in an increasing degree of depravity. From arrogance, the sixth step, the monk proceeds to presumption. Further isolating himself from his community, he pretends to know better than the others, and he makes a point of wanting things differently. On the eighth step we observe the monk justifying the sins committed and losing himself in a psychological labyrinth:

The person who wants to excuse himself will say: 'I did not do it' or: 'I did it, but it was not wrong' or, if it was wrong: 'It was not very wrong' or, if it was very wrong: 'I did not mean to do wrong'.⁸ (Hum XVII 45)

Even worse than the preceding steps of pride is the next one: insincere confession. Often such a confession is marked by a deliberate show element. If, however, the person in question is cross-examined, he quickly and loudly reveals his insincerity. Eventually, this demonstration of rebelliousness ends in utter contempt of the monastic community. Not only the brethren but also the superiors are deliberately offended by the display of disobedience on the part of the sinful monk.

This is not yet the end of the *descensio*. To reach the bottom two further steps down have to be taken: the freedom to sin and the habit of sin. However, those two steps are no longer located inside the monastery. The monk who has reached this stage has excommunicated himself from the monastic community. He has been chased

⁸ This is a nice example of what John Jones, writing about Dostoevsky, calls 'a slippage sentence'. Jones discusses the opening lines of *The Possessed*. One of the main characters Stepan Verkhovensky, the 'professor' in a provincial town, is introduced as follows: 'Nevertheless he was a most intelligent and gifted man, even, so to say, a scholar, though, as far as his scholarship was concerned, well, in a word, his scholarship didn't amount to much, to nothing at all, I think' (Jones 1983: 270).

Evans (1987: 135), by putting the different excuses ('I did not do it' etc.) in the mouth of different persons ('one person will say...another...'), slightly spoils the slippage effect.

away or he has left on his own accord. So, at the bottom of the ladder the correspondence between *loci* and *imagines* breaks down. The lowest degrees of corruption lack the subsistence of a place which might provide them with the materiality needed for structural existence and communication. Visible though they may be, they have ceased to be part of meaningful imagery.

What then do these portraits have in common beyond the common psychology of deterioration? How are they to be situated, what is their common space? Obviously, as has been repeatedly pointed out, it is the Benedictine monastery which underlies the steps of humility and pride. Its monumentality has been broken into, so we have said, when a stone is thrown into the pond of repose, in the harbour of silence. In terms of the ladder of humility, curiosity has made its appearance as the reversal, and, consequently, the caricature of the fear of God.

If you see a monk whom you held in high esteem so far, his eyes wandering wherever he stands, walks or sits, his head lifted, his eyes alert, then you can tell from his lack of control that he has changed. That clearly is a symptom of the illness which is about to invade his soul.

The fear of the Lord has gone, the permanence of which is to be contrasted with the unnerving and purposeless movements such as walking, sitting, standing. The first step of humility has come under attack from the first steps of pride. Curiosity, commotion and nervousity have entered, probably for ever. For the last step of pride, habitual sin, is implied in the dynamics of the first one, curiosity. As a consequence, the other steps of humility are bound to be contaminated by the same, ever increasing looseness and restlessness. In the process they are transformed into steps of pride. The modest and solemn behaviour *sine risu* turns into light-mindedness, silence into loquacity, obedience to superiors into singularity, modesty into arrogance, living in the monastic state of mind into presumption, humble confession to the abbot into self-justification, suffering injustice into insincere confession, obedience to the superior into rebelliousness, abandoning one's own free will into freedom to sin and the fear of the Lord into habitual sin.

At the end of both the first and the second part of the treatise Bernard points to the fact that the *via descensionis* is included in the *via ascensionis* and vice versa.

David seems to offer you the choice of two ways (Ps 1,1,6). There is only one, as you know; but there is a distinction to be made. We can use different names for the way of sin, by which those are going down travel, and the way of truth, by which those who are going up journey. It is the same way which goes up to the throne and down from it, the same way to the city and back. One door lets people both into and out of a house (Jn 10,9) The angels appeared to Jacob going up and down the same ladder (Gn 28,12). What is the relevance of this? That if you desire to return to the truth you do not need to search for the road. You know it. You came down that way. Retrace your footsteps. Go up by the same steps by which you came down in pride. Thus he who has sunk to the twelfth step of pride must climb the first step of humility. If it is the eleventh, let him find the second. If the tenth, the third; the ninth, the fourth, the eighth, the fifth; the seventh, the sixth; the sixth, the seventh; the fifth, the eighth, the fourth, the ninth; the third, the tenth, the second, the eleventh; the first, the twelfth. Identify the step of pride you have reached and you will not need to strive to find the way of humility. (Hum IX 27: Evans 1987: 122–3)

You are perhaps saying, brother Godfrey, that I have done something different from what you asked and I promised, and instead of writing about the steps of humility I have written about the steps of pride. I reply, I can teach only what I have learned. I did not think I could fittingly describe the steps up when I know more about going down than going up. The blessed Benedict sets the steps of humility before you, which he himself first set out in his heart (Ps 83,6). I have nothing to set before you except the order of my descent. But, if you look carefully, you will find there the way up. If on your way to Rome you meet a man coming from there and ask him the way, how can he do better than show you the way he has come? As he lists the castles, towns and cities, rivers and mountains through which he travelled, as he describes his journey he is telling you what you will find as you go, so that

you will recognize each place as you come to it, just as he saw it as he came the other way. Similarly, in these steps of our descent you will perhaps find steps up. As you climb you will read them better in your heart than in this book. (Hum XXII 57; Evans 1987: 142–3)

The comparison with the trajectory to and from Rome is a striking one and yet, like all comparisons, it proves to be inaccurate. In one important respect the image of the *scala* differs from the image of the way to and from Rome. From whatever direction one views castles, towns, rivers etc., they can be recognised as the things they are. Their front and rear, though not completely overlapping, are not so different as to confuse the traveller with regard to their identity. Consequently, the traveller on his way back after having visited Rome basically makes the same journey and is guided by the same landmarks. The castle has not changed into a ship on a stormy sea, neither has the river into a paved road. As for the image of the ladder of ascent and descent things look somewhat more complex. Admittedly, the *via ascensionis* and the *via descensionis* are also two sides of the same coin. However, there is a difference of quality, rather than of quantity, which means that for the time being the way down has to be taken seriously, i.e. as a separate entity. Of course, the perspective created by Bernard in his attempt to point out the image of the mounting monk looks, and, indeed, is, illusory. Nevertheless, it is for good reason that he suggests that ascending and descending, good and evil, the law abiding and the disobedient monk represent different things or persons, different options. We, i.e. the audience, the readers, know that this is far from being true. Evil, disobedience, descent do not possess a subsistence of their own which would make them a real alternative for the way up. It is only the illusion of the moment which suggests evil to be substantial. But in the monastic theatre it is precisely illusion that counts. In other words, the image of the ladder is not as neutral and harmless as the image of the way to Rome. The stages along the latter will not cease to be the reliable landmarks they are. In contrast, the descending monk, in spite of his efforts seriously to go downhill, will turn out to have oriented himself towards a *fata morgana*. So dismal an outcome naturally raises doubts with regard to the status of the way leading up to a catastrophic end. For how long can such unrealistic behaviour be sustained and what purpose

does it serve? We may suspect Bernard to use his rhetorical skills so as to bring out the contours of true humility more distinctly. For the time being, however, we are faced with the 'reality' of evil. Somehow and somewhere a breach has been made in the fence of the monastery. Undirected movement and nervousness have invaded the solid mechanics of a silent community, causing disintegration throughout. The innocent inhabitants are faced with the caricature of their own existence, the parody of their own progress. Eventually, it is death which has entered the scene, but which as yet has not revealed its real intentions. As a result, we do not yet realise the scope of its destruction, or, in monastic terms, its final contribution to the survival of truth.

3. *Ascent: every man is a liar*

Loci, imagines. The figure of the descending monk has caused a stir in a set of fixed *imagines*. However, this stir does not follow the usual pattern according to which, generally speaking, images are to be interrelated within the monastery. The problem is that monastic language is never permitted to be general. All along the process of climbing up and going down this language is called upon to account for what the monastic author does and says against the backdrop of inescapable truth represented by the monastic complex. Yet, in spite of the fact that we have to face the truth of descent being inevitably reduced to ascent, and pride to humility—thus leaving the structure of descent deliberately unexplained to the point of having its appearance fully evaporate—, the two 'alternatives' ought to be considered separably. In the preceding pages a rough assessment has been given of the *scala descensionis* but not a definite one. Before performing that final reduction of descent to ascent, more information is required with regard to the outlook of the ladder of ascent. So, approaching our goal in a cyclical manner, we embark on a second round. Having first confronted the harbour of silence with the parody of descent, we will now take a closer look at the way humility becomes shaped in the monastic process, only to come back, once more, to the nature of death and destruction. The

monastery itself being the home-like shelter of pure and intimate imagination, we may wonder to what extent linguistic expression is able imitatively to tell what is going on inside.

Unlike Bernard's description of the *scala descensionis* in the second part of the treatise, the subject of the first part, the way up, is not presented directly in terms of the Benedictine steps. Two conclusions may be drawn from this. First, as far as Bernard is concerned, the effectiveness of the way down, obviously, is in no need of being supplemented on the spot by its counterpart, the way up. However intertwined the two may prove to be in the course of the treatise, the *scala descensionis*, once it has made its appearance, operates on its own. Second, the ladder of ascent, acting more or less as a substitute for the evocation of a more remote presence of truth, echoes the home-like intimacy of the final goal of humility rather than technically providing the tools to get there. As a result, a dreamlike atmosphere is suggested in which the journey along the ladder of humility seems to have become part of a past. From that point of view the harsh reality of following Benedict's steps of humility actually comes down to a process of sweet reminiscences under the protection of eternal truth. Thus the monastic complex representing home in an ineffable manner creates the opportunity for the mind to travel, or rather, to remember itself having travelled. During the process, activity and passivity, exercise and rest, travel and home, all being put into effect by memory, converge, so to speak, in one continuous act of remembrance.

What does the superstructure crowning the steps of humility look like? First and foremost, it is truth. 'I am the way, the truth and the life,' the Gospel of St. John says, and it is this Christ, the culmination of truth, who both stands on the top of the ladder and figures as *viaticum*, as provision for the journey ahead.

The way of humility is good (Ps 118,71), for by it we seek truth, attain love, and share the fruits of wisdom. Then, just as Christ is the fulfilment of the law (Rom 10,4), so the end result of humility is the knowledge of truth. For he makes himself known to the humble. 'He gives grace,' therefore 'to the humble' (1 Pt 5,5). (Hum II 5; Evans 1987: 105)

Here the hierarchical image of Christ holding together the world of diversity underneath breaks without becoming disparate. One of the reasons for Christ's continuous presence, all in one piece, throughout the steps of humility lies in the fact that it is closely tied up with the human factor, i.e. the traveller, the spectator and the author. In those capacities, Bernard, while remaining the image of God, is not only invited to guarantee the continuity of divine truth but must also try to express that situation in words. However alienated from the source one may be, because of sin or for whatever reason, one cannot cut oneself off from the area of divine influence altogether. Just as it is impossible for a monk factually to leave the monastic complex—even the monk who, having proved himself to be beyond correction, has been chased away, will re-appear at the end of the treatise—, the inbuilt presence of truth will always call that part of the soul which has gone astray back to its source.

From the perspective of this christian anthropology, truth can thus be seen to have three aspects: truth in ourselves, truth in our neighbours and truth in and by itself. Contrary to what one might expect, *in statu isto* the first stage in the process of learning truth is not truth in itself. The proper educational process begins with truth in one's neighbour rather than with truth in itself.

Take note of the order of these degrees as well as their number. First, Truth himself teaches you that the nature of truth must first be sought in our neighbours before we seek it in itself. After this you will be shown why you ought to seek it in yourself before you seek it in your neighbour. (Hum III 6; Evans 1987: 106)

This law of love-thy-neighbour is based on the Sermon on the Mount. There the merciful are said to feel for their neighbours and to love them to such a degree that they come to share their joy as well as their suffering. Here too a monastic connotation can be heard. The social body of the monastery is one, undividedly present in the supreme truth of Him whom it embodies. If then the next step reveals a change in priorities, the same element of social solidarity still applies. It is impossible to pity others for their misery unless one thoroughly knows one's own wretched state. In other words, self-knowledge is prior to truth in one's neighbour since it is the condition for getting access to it.

But even the individualistic aspect of self-knowledge is reduced again to social proportions. Christ himself is the supreme example of one whose lonely suffering has served a social purpose. Commenting on the text from Hebrews: 'Christ has learned obedience from the things he suffered' Bernard proposes the following explanation, admitting, by the by, its exegetical improbability:

But perhaps you find it hard to accept the idea that Christ, the Wisdom of God (1 Cor 1,24) 'learned' mercy, as if he through whom all things were made (Jn 1,3) has ever been ignorant of anything which exists; especially since the text I quoted from Hebrews to support this view can be understood in another sense which does not seem absurd. Thus, 'he learned' can be taken to refer not to our Head in his own Person, but to his body, which is the Church (Col. 1,24), and then this is the sense: 'And he learned obedience from the things he suffered' means that he learned in his body from what he suffered in his Head. For that death, that cross, the opprobrium, the scorn, the beatings which Christ endured, what else were they but outstanding examples of obedience for his body, that is, for ourselves? (Hum III 7; Evans 1987: 107)

Although in what follows Bernard will prefer a reading of the text which views 'the learning from the things he suffered' in its entirety as referring to the incarnation, the message here is clear. In the ordeal of Christ man finds himself being born with Him. Thus the gap between God and man is bridged. Through the incarnation Christ has not just come near to the sons of Adam, he has in fact become their neighbour (*proximus*).

I do not say that he was made wiser by the experience, but he came to seem nearer to us weak sons of Adam, whom he did not disdain to make and to call his brothers (Heb 2,11). He wanted men to have no hesitation in entrusting their weaknesses to him, who was able as God to heal them and who wanted to do so as being their neighbour. (Hum III 9; Evans 1987: 108)

It is in Christ's incarnational experience that his 'learning' is to be found. That experience, in turn, should be seen as solidarity with human misery rather than as theoretical knowledge, the latter having been and continuing to be eternal anyhow. How then does Christ's

proximity effect the knowledge of truth in man himself? Truth as self-knowledge proved to be the first step in the process of learning truth as the fruit of humility. What then is the purpose of this detour via Christ if it was the *condition humaine* which was at stake? The answer to this question points in a rather paradoxical direction. In whatever way self-knowledge manifests itself, it inevitably distances itself from itself in order to judge itself. Further, momentarily leaving aside the act of knowing in a literal sense—in the same way as the *praescientia* of Christ is hardly relevant when compared with experience—, it has to be admitted that human knowledge is hampered by the unreliable nature of its performance. Love, hate and fear contribute considerably to misleading and obstructing sound judgment.

Neither love nor hatred can give a judgment of truth. Do you want to hear the judgment of truth? “As I hear, so I judge” (Jn 5,30), not, “As I hate,” “As I love,” “As I fear.” This is the judgment of hatred, “We have a law, and according to the law he ought to die” (Jn 19,7). There is a judgment of fear, “If we leave him alone, the Romans will come and destroy our place and nation” (Jn 11,48). This is the judgment of love, as David said to his son who wanted to kill him, “Spare the boy Absalom”(2 Sm 18,5). I know that it is decreed in human laws, and in both secular and ecclesiastical causes, that special friends of the litigants may not try their cases, in case they are misled, or mislead others by their love. If love can make you diminish, or even hide, your friend’s fault, how much more will judgment deceive you when you think of your own faults? (Hum IV 14; Evans 1987: 112–30)

In order to know, man must realise the utter unreliability of his own judgment as part of the general misery of human life. Not through pride but through humility is it possible for him gradually to detect the contours of his own situation and of his own self. Knowledge obtained in such a manner makes one see oneself as the *nihil* one actually is. Such is the harsh reality of truth. Theory of knowledge becomes reduced to its starting-point, the realm of humility where man, humbly, places himself before himself and is ashamed of himself. Only then and there is Christ near, enabling man properly to judge himself.

Next follows the second step of humility which looks even bleaker than the first one. The individual self-knowledge that was obtained in the first step is here widened and made representative *pars pro toto* of the human condition as such. Through an act of utter self-alienation—which at the same time is an act of alienating oneself from God—man undergoes what appears to be a caricature of a mystical experience. Comparing his own wretchedness with that of others he says in his ecstasy (*in excessu suo*): ‘Every man is a liar/*omnis homo mendax*’ (Ps 115,11). He is quite unlike the Pharisee who said: ‘My God. I thank you that I am not like other men’ (Lk 18,11) thus excepting himself from the general wretchedness of mankind. Instead, this *excessus* should be interpreted in a Pauline sense. ‘All have sinned and everyone needs the glory of the Lord’ (Rom 3,23). And ecstasy, indeed, it is, be it not a happy one. It is striking how Bernard, when speaking about humility as the positive side of the *via ascensionis*, manages in no time to be back at the messy situation of human behaviour. The reason why is rather obvious at this stage. Unable to distinguish properly between Christ and the social corpus representing him in the monastic way of life Bernard electrifies this quiet environment by exclaiming: *omnis homo mendax*. The sense of fright and terror created by this exclamation, which represents truth in its naked appearance, makes man flee from the despair of disorientation caused by the presence of divine justice, to the safe haven of divine mercy. Here again we are confronted with the unreliability of geography, the untrustfulness of worldly *loci*, ways which underneath their attractive appearance are leading nowhere. And once again, it is the healthy unrest resulting from the basic unreliability of worldly ways of life which incites man to reach the road of truth.

Clearly, the picture of truth outlined here is not based on the general idea of human nature. Neither is the total unreliability of human judgment to be characterized as an accurate portrayal of human knowledge. Under consideration here are the events which take place near the top of the *via ascensionis*. When at the top of that climbing process expressions such as misery or *omnis homo mendax* are being used, it is the technique of spiritual exercise which is at stake, self-knowledge in the true, performative sense of the word, social insight and, finally, the knowledge of truth in and by itself as it towers above the ladder of ascent.

Through the third step of truth, contemplation, the mind is pushed up high towards its source and goal, the Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, as reflected in the human faculties of *contemplatio*, *ratio*, and *caritas*. The revelation of truth, i.e. the works of the Father and the love diffused in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, are overwhelmingly present. Yet for their movements to be made visible, they must depend on the theory of knowledge as embodied by the Son. Descending through his incarnation and ascending after his resurrection, the Son is the true architect of the ladder of ascent and descent, the *logos*, the designer of *loci* and *imagines*. Here the process of self-alienation, caused by the ruffle in the pond, reaches its peak. For here one realises the full impact of what it means to step beside oneself and judge oneself.

The Son of God, the Word and Wisdom of the Father, first mercifully assuming that power of our souls which is called reason, when he found it weighed down by the body (Wis 9,15), a captive to sin, blinded by ignorance, given up to outward things, he mercifully assumed it; he lifted it by his power, instructed it by his wisdom, drew it within himself and employed it in a wonderful way on his behalf as judge. It is truth's task to judge. That is why, out of reverence for the Word to which it is united, human reason becomes its own accuser, witness, and judge (Prv 18,17). From this first union of the Word and reason is born humility. (Hum VII 21; Evans 1987: 117)

The friction occurring here in the humble man—which has its counter-image in the nervousness at the bottom of the *scala*—appears already to be subsumed under the figure of Christ. The text from Hebrews 'He has learned from the things he suffered' receives its full meaning here. The *excessus* inside the monastery, starting with man judging himself, brings forth the figure of Him whom it is supposed always to represent. In the Trinitarian course of further events man, i.e. the monk, appears to be linked to the Spirit, i.e. love, and to the Father, i.e. the summit of contemplation. The last stage is enacted when reason can no longer judge itself or the soul trouble itself with its neighbour, i.e. when all the ruffles in the pond

have gone. The proper *locus* of this final stage can only be the *cubiculum* of the king. There, place and time appear to have merged into a 'chronotope'⁹ when silence is being observed in heaven for a short while, that is, for half an hour.

4. *'The order of my descent'*

Spatial imagination. But for how long can this imagination be sustained without losing grasp of the spatial implications? Wherever one looks and whatever pattern one follows, one seems to be bound to end up in the unimaginable space of the Father. At the same time it is there that the imagery of the ladder breaks down and, in accordance with the Rule of Wittgenstein, has to be thrown away. The Son has come down from heaven to help man climb up. The Holy Spirit has been sent to lead man on. However, the Father has never been told to descend from heaven or be sent to earth. Bernard illustrates the special position of the Father by referring to Paul's 'mystical experience'. When Paul in 2 Corinth. 12,2 tells how he has been rapt to the third heaven, he purposely uses the verb 'carry' rather than 'lead'.

If such an Apostle says that he was carried away, to a place of which he had no knowledge by learning about it and could not reach on his own feet even when he was conducted there, let me not presume to think that I, who am so much less than he, can get there by any labour of my own. Let me not trust in my own strength or effort...

I conclude from this that because the Father did not come down, the Apostle could not climb up to heaven to see him, but he remembers that he was carried there. 'No man has gone up into heaven but he who came down from heaven' (Jn 3,13)...

Those whom the Son has called to the first heaven by humility, the Spirit summoned to the second by love, the Father exalts to the third by contemplation. In the first they are humbled in truth and say "In your truth you have humbled me"

⁹ Cf. Bakhtin 1990.

(Ps 118,75). In the second they rejoice together in the truth and sing, "How good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity" (Ps 132,1). For we read that "love rejoices in truth" (1 Cor 13,6). Third, they are carried away to the secrets of truth and they cry, "My secret is mine, my secret is mine" (Is 24,16). (Hum VIII 22–23; Evans 1987: 118–20)

By leaving the Father where he is, and always has been, Bernard subtly introduces a new *locus*, which, unapproachable by means of climbing techniques, yet inextricably intertwined with the Trinitarian process, holds the reader of his treatise in suspense. Not without reason the exclamation *secretum meum mihi, secretum meum mihi* calls back to mind the comings and goings of the bridegroom in the Canticle (cf. the analysis of Sermon 23). As so often, Bernard ultimately intersperses his discourse with hints at an increasingly remote reality. The scene of the bride in the *cubiculum* of the bridegroom is always about to be extended to the scene of the shepherd resting in the fields at midday: *tertium caelum*.

Yet in this very moment when images almost evaporate into the thin air of the third heaven, Bernard, or, his reader at least, stands in danger of loosing his grip. That comes as no surprise if one realises how many threads are held together. On the one hand, we find terms which divide and organize space: *cubiculum, caelum, scala, ascensio, descensio*. On the other, we find images which are being produced and sustained by those spatial categories at different stages and with different degrees of intensity and visibility: truth, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Father, monastic man, humility, pride. Through endless variations within the spatial setting those images are subject to change. Thus they grant visibility to the *loci* and create suspense without ever occupying a fixed place or having a fixed shape. That is why they function both as organising and as disorganising principles. For instance, a ladder is being erected into the third heaven only in order to appear next having ceased to be of any use. It looks as if the monk, willy nilly, is dragged along in the linear pattern designed by his monastic environment without really being in control. He has become part and parcel of his own monastic space, included in the perfection of Christ's *ascensio* and *descensio*, in the breath of the Holy Spirit, and before realising what happens, in the secrets of the Father. However, things are moving too fast, thereby causing a feeling of vertigo on the part of the poor

monastic participant. All of a sudden the ladder turns out to have disappeared from the monastic code. No other place of refuge is left than the divine *locus*, where Christ has once and for all ascended, the resting place of truth itself. Since it is clear that the monastic participant has left himself behind in his *excessus* and joined the Trinitarian course of events, it seems quite inappropriate to ask questions about his independence.

It is here that the two extremes of the ladder meet. The full presence of the divine is once more confronted with the dark sides of existence. Thus (monastic) man is constituted in his own right, that is, in his own profession. Through a subtle use of apocalyptic and nocturnal imagery Bernard creates shadows in the bright side of life. A mysterious figure looms on the horizon who, unable to keep pace with the sweeping manifestations of the divine, has been left behind. It is the *ego* of the author of those fast moving images which has to admit to its failure to become identical with the process described. He suffers from his own verbosity and he, of all people, is the one doomed to stay behind, spiritless and worn out.

But why am I, poor man, running about the two higher heavens with my tongue, talking with more loquacity than spiritual liveliness, when with my hands and feet I am still striving down here? At his bidding and with his help I have put up a ladder for myself (Gn 28,12–13). This is the road which points the way to God's salvation (Ps 49,23). For already I glimpse the Lord leaning on the top of it, and I rejoice already to hear the voice of Truth...

But I climb slowly, a weary traveller, and I need somewhere to rest. Woe is me if the darkness surrounds me (Jn 12,35), or if I should flee in the winter or on the Sabbath (Mt 24,20), for now, even at an acceptable time and in a day of salvation (2 Cor 6,2), I can scarcely make my way.

Why am I so slow? Pray for me anyone who is my son, brother, friend, companion of my journey in the Lord. Pray for me to the Almighty, that he may give my footsteps vigour and that the foot of pride may not come near me (Ps 35,12). (Hum IX 24; Evans 1987: 120–1)

Tenebrae/'darkness' is all pervasive. Next a nightly scene is evoked in which shadowy figures are seen to be moving: Jacob's nocturnal fight with the Angel (Gn 32).

It was better for Jacob when the sinew of his thigh shrivelled at the touch of the angel, than for it to swell, collapse, and fall at the touch of the angel of pride. Would that the angel would touch my sinew and make it shrink, if as a result of this weakness I was able to progress, for I can make no progress in my own strength. (Hum IX 25; Evans 1987: 121)

What remains is an *ego* seriously handicapped, boasting of his own weakness, progressing at walking speed, *pedentim*. That is the context within which ascension is practised.

'Who will give me wings like a dove so that I might fly away' to the truth and 'be at rest' in love (Ps 54,7)? But I have no wings. 'Lead me then, Lord, in your way, so that I may walk in your truth' (Ps 85,11) and 'the truth will make me free' (Jn 8,32). Woe is me that I ever abandoned it. If I had not climbed down so lightly and carelessly, I should not be striving so long and hard to climb up. (Hum IX 26; Evans 1987: 122)

A dream has been dreamt which was a dream of truth. Participating in that truth the monastic mind was to be carried away up into the sky, the third heaven. All that remains from that spectacular flight, however, is an *ego* which finds itself thrown back in the monastic space where a ladder has been erected on which one may descend or, indeed, ascend. Of course, to ascend is the object of all climbing activities. Intertwined as ascent and descent are, however, one can just as well be seen to descend. Yet it is one and the same *ego* which is the subject of ascension and descension. As for descension, we have traced the way down as far back as possible. The question of to which degree *ego* and descent are to be interrelated still awaits analysis. How deeply is the descending *ego* supposed to sink in order to qualify as an authentic image of monastic reality? What death is one supposed to die in order to meet the demands and standards of true life?

Here geographical lines seem to converge into motionless states of death and life. Almost overwhelmed by the overpowering rest of such a state—all one sees are the frozen figures of habitual sinners

or angelic believers—one is not sure at which end of the ladder one is, final death or final life. Since the image of the ladder which alone would be able to help to structure experience is vanishing, the means by which to judge one's state are simply lacking. In terms of monastic geography, the suggestion of spiritual travel to and from heaven is reduced to the enclosed site of the monastery where lines are inevitably curved into circles. How do we distinguish in such a state point A from point B, light from darkness, wilderness from order? Yet at the same time, once the linear travelground has vanished, the echoes of poetry are heard: 'the wings of the dove', 'the rapture', however remote and past, 'into the third heaven'. Thus a final appeal is made to memory to recall the *locus* of sweet slumber—and its accompanying images—in the king's bedchamber. There the bride sleeps but her heart is awake...

Via meae descensionis. The same monastic space which conditions the flight into heaven underlies the excommunication of the habitual sinner. It guarantees the latter's identity as well as the return from his (circular) wanderings. Let us once more follow Bernard in a final attempt to call back the descending monk who, at the bottom of the ladder, is about to fall into the abyss.

I have described as dead the man who, defending his own sins, has rushed down to the eighth step. For the dead do not make confession, any more than someone who does not exist (Sir 17,26). After the tenth step, which is the third from the eighth, he is already swept away by freedom to sin, when he is driven out of the community of the monastery. But when he has gone on to the fourth step after that eighth one, now truly is he said to be four days dead, when, slipping into the fifth stage, he is buried in habitual sin (Hum XXII 55; Evans 1987: 142).

So, with the tenth step of pride the process of death becomes really grim: rebellion. On the eleventh step one is completely removed from the monastery. Yet, though hurtling straight to destruction in contempt and forgetfulness of the abbot and his fellow-brothers, that monk has not yet lost all sense of remorse. There is still some fear of God left in him. The last, the twelfth step changes even that. There one has become altogether oblivious of one's own reason and of the fear of God. The *timor dei*, which coincides with the first

step of humility, has disappeared out of sight causing the sinner to utter the silliest of statements: *Non est deus*/there is no God.

Clearly, it is as little permitted to intervene on behalf of a person so dominated by lust as it would be to disturb the bride driven by love in the arms of the bridegroom. Does that mean that all one can do is passively watch the spectacle of the sinner's downfall?

Now I would not that anyone should pray for such a one, says the Apostle John (1 Jn 5,16). But, surely, Apostle, you are not counselling despair? He who really loves him will still weep. Let him not presume to pray nor cease to sorrow. What am I saying? If there remains any refuge of hope, is there not a place for prayer?

But hear one who believes, hopes, yet does not pray, 'Lord,' she said, 'If you had been here my brother would not have died' (Jn 11,21). Great is the faith which believed that the Lord would have prevented death by his presence if he had been there. No more than that? Perish the thought that she who believed he could keep someone alive doubted that he could raise him from the dead. 'But now,' she says, 'I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you' (Jn 11,22). When Jesus asked where they had laid him, she answered, 'Come and see' (Jn 11,34). Why did she say that? O Martha, you have given us great signs of faith. Can you be failing in faith? 'Come,' you said, 'and see.' Why, if you did not despair, did you not pester the Master relentlessly? Perhaps faith sometimes receives what prayer is not bold enough to ask for.

As he approaches the body you stop him and say, 'Lord, by this time he will be stinking; he has been in the tomb for four days' (Jn 11,39). Did you say this in despair, or for a purpose? For the Lord himself, after his resurrection, pretended to be going further when he wanted to remain with the disciples (Lk 24,28). O holy women who are Christ's friends, if you love your brother, why do you not press him to show mercy, him whose power you cannot doubt, and in whose holiness you have absolute trust (Jn 11,3)?

This is their answer. 'We pray better by not appearing to pray. We trust better by seeming not to trust. We show faith by appearing to be uncertain. We show faith and demonstrate our love. He to whom there is no need to say anything knows what

we desire (Wis 7,27; Mt 6,8). We know that he can do everything. But this great miracle, so new, so unheard-of even though it is within his power, greatly exceeds anything our humility can deserve. It is enough for us to have brought his power here, to have given his holiness a reason, and we prefer to wait patiently upon his will rather than impudently to ask what he will not perhaps wish to do. Perhaps what our deserving lacks our modesty will supply.' (Hum XXII 52; Evans 1987: 139–40)

In this passage the *via descensionis* is brought to its conclusion. Disconnected from any place which could serve as a centre for meaningful communication, death is found imaginatively stored away in a kind of space outside the monastery which looks as remote as the third heaven or the fields where the bridegroom rests at midday. All dotted lines, constructions and structures, in short, all steps of the ladder have now been left behind. With it has gone the opportunity to consider descent as a mirror of ascent. There is simply no room for that. Yet it is in this zero-point that a new mode of discourse originates. Ultimately, death is the unspoken possibility of resurrection. This resurrection recalls the figures around the dead man, whose silence is more powerful and effective than their speech. Just as the geographical/spatial lines are reduced to the circular shape of the monastery, speech is traced down to its bare essentials. *Venite et videte* 'come and see', this is all there is to be said. This abbreviated word, this *verbum abbreviatum*, is uttered by, and tells the story of, the author who lives up to his claim of having presented nothing but the order of his own descent. Standing on the twelfth step of his ladder he manages, just like an acrobat, to have the world turn round on his fingertips. For one moment—more precisely, for the time of a *dimidia hora*/half an hour—the monastery has outshone its own imagination. As the place where death and resurrection meet it has been transformed from an image into reality.

PART III

A WAY OF LIVING

INTRODUCTION PART III

A WAY OF LIVING

In the last two chapters the development of Bernard's monastic imagination was seen to coincide with his technique of writing. The Cantic scene of the admission to, and withdrawal from, the King's *cubiculum* as well as the Benedictine image of the ladder of ascent and descent were dramatised and acted out through the author's introduction of his *ego* into his own text as both the subject and coordinator of the narration.

If, in the following two chapters, I intend to elaborate on the literary expression of the monastic way of life, all I can do is to retell the same story. Once again we shall observe Bernard, the author, moving around in his own text when presenting us with the manifestations of love and death within the walls of the monastery. The very fact that those manifestations will take on the shape of a *figura* guarantees the continuity of this 'personal' image while at the same time raising questions as to the technique by which the dynamics of life, love and death contained by this image are to be brought to the fore.

How, then, do love and death fit in with the structure of the monastery as outlined above? How does one love and die in the Jerusalem of Clairvaux? Here a complication arises. Applied to life and death the geographical structure of the monastery seems to deprive human existence of the possibility of progression and development. Just as Philip's journey to Jerusalem was cut short by his early arrival in Clairvaux, the vicissitudes of life and death appear to have been replaced already by the stability of the monastic, angelic way of life.

His [Philip's] promise to stay implies that it is here that his rest will be for ever more. He has chosen this spot for his

dwelling because there can be found, if not yet the vision, then certainly the expectation of that peace of which it is said: 'The peace of God which surpasses all our understanding'.

Although, admittedly, the expectation of the peace which is beyond our understanding introduces an element of suspense in the monastic paradise—and a very important element it is—, it does not refer back to the uncertainties of life in the world, disturbing as it were the claim of ultimate rest and fulfilment implied in this picture. If, underneath the surface of calm, traces of unrest are to be detected, it will be due to the awe resulting from the contraction of the dimensions of space and time—'the vast and rough sea' which had been crossed in no time (*in brevi*)—in the monastic site. Consequently, rather than being a matter of unbound imagination or merely spiritual interiorisation, mental travelling in space and time materialises within the confines of the monastic walls.

A comparison with the concept of mythical time—inextricably intertwined as it is with the notion of space—may illustrate the complexities of Bernard's position. Mythical time is generally assumed to be dialectical in that the element of time is introduced only to be suppressed at once.¹ For the very reason that mythical reality represents a totality rather than a succession of moments, the link with the past is established, not in order to make the present part of a progressive concept of time, but to withdraw it altogether from the stream of temporality.² This unbroken, 'timeless' moment is re-enacted over and over again in the rites 'justifying the present structures of reality by lending them the status of eternity'.³ If we compare this rough concept of mythical time to the monastic site as a representation of angelic time, it appears that there too the 'end and the beginning were always there...and all is always now'. The monastic existence being contaminated by eternity is purged of life's uncertainties and liabilities and safeguarded from the vicissitudes of progressive time. In the monastic myth and rite this very process of purification consists of nothing less than the re-enactment of a reality—Christ's glorious rebirth—whose presence, though rooted in the past, is all pervasive in the present.

¹ Lévi-Strauss 1964.

² See Dupré 1991: 140.

³ Dupré 1991: 140.

Yet the shared concept of the suppression of progressive time should not obscure the existence of basic differences between the monastic and mythical concepts of time and space. First, it should be noted that, from a material as well as from a spiritual point of view, the monastery is of an artificial nature which is quite unlike the sophistication attributed by Lévi-Strauss to *la pensée sauvage*. Admittedly, providing the stage for uninterrupted liturgical chant and prayer, the monastery is first and foremost the embodiment of rites. However, just as the streams and rivulets of the Cistercian site are often diverted for industrial purposes, Bernard, the author, breaks into the constant flow of monastic re-creation. It is this very intervention which is more than, and different from, the distinction between the 'raw' and the 'cooked'. If the liturgical body itself (in a way similar to the societies described by Lévi-Strauss) can be seen as containing both elements, archaic powers as well as 'rational' structures, Bernard's own literary contribution to this body, though presented as an imitation and repetition of the liturgical process, stands somewhat aloof because of the author's cunning game with the distance, the non-convergence of himself as designer on the one hand, and the monastic rite on the other. However, the enclosure imposed on him by the monastic site prevents the would be author from taking his distance in a non-committal and autonomous way. For him there is no other way to express the 'difference' between himself and the liturgical body he is in the process of describing than to proceed by means of repetition and imitation, or, to put it in more personal terms, to shape his work according to the dimensions of a *figura* connecting the 'mythical' past with the reality of the present.

But exactly what does this reality look like? Here we come across a second feature by which the monastery differs from the timeless actuality of the mythical origin. If we try once more to imagine ourselves taking in the view of the monastic site, we may discern, inside the enclosed building complex, a community of singing and praying monks. However, the *figura* they establish is far from representing a mere Ur-version of the world through the transformation of time into timelessness. On the contrary. Rather than eliminating time the monastic *figura* reveals time as mere temporality. The same obtains for the notion of space. Just as the enclosed shape of the building complex puts its stamp on the

surrounding wilderness without destroying its wildness—and just as the entire complex of buildings and wilderness, in turn, puts its stamp on the surrounding world at large—, so the singing and praying monks mark their provenance from the world of action and history without eliminating the latter's (so-called) uncoordinated nature. This does not mean that their conversion from the world to the monastery is a half-hearted affair nor should the oblivion which is the hallmark of their new way of life be considered less comprehensive than its absolute nature would seem to imply.

It cannot be denied that we have a paradox here. The enclosed shape of Bernard's monastery excludes the extra-mural world, thereby intensifying the latter's contours and dimensions. Thus monastic oblivion seems to boil down to a heightened sense of what is about to be forgotten. This intensification by means of exclusion applies not only to the secular world at large but also to extra-mural religious space and time. Bernard himself, for instance, would be the last person to deny the importance of crusading to Jerusalem. Yet his own apology for Philip's decision to stay in the Jerusalem of Clairvaux, reduces the latter's original travel plans to the well-intended but superfluous actions they were. From the monastic point of view, forgetting about those actions means leaving them where they are. Thus those actions are revealed as the tough and tangible realities of real life. But remembering the material Jerusalem by means of the monastic oblivion means that we leave it alone, both bringing out and respecting the untouchability, and, in a sense, the integrity of space, time and history. At the same time, this forgetful indifference cannot be achieved except by repeating the very same suppressed actions on a much more economical level, by contracting them into the *figura* of a monk travelling within the confines of his *stabilitas loci*.

Even more poignantly, this special way of forgetting also obtains for the non-religious extra-mural world left behind by the converted monk, monastic oblivion meaning, first and foremost, the blanching of one's remembrance of things past in order to re-fill it with a memory activated by the fragrance emerging from the garden of one's new habitat. 'Bernard's monk seems to have trained himself to an habitual loss of self, distinguished by a purged memory and a capacity for remembering only the universal experiences of the

sensual delights of Scripture.”⁴ But once again, the technique of banning sin as a permanent feature of the monastic life only heightens the sense of what is left behind. Admittedly, the extra-mural world of love and death is left alone:

We see the dead daily mourn their dead: many tears, little profit... (Sermon 26 on the Song of Songs)

But it is precisely this monastic forgetfulness, this pretence of indifference which brings out and keeps at bay the boundless dimensions of worldly passion and suffering. It is not the monk’s ambition to shape oblivion by transforming that world and sublimating it into a harmless spiritual existence without roots in his

⁴ Coleman 1992: 186. Coleman illustrates the reality of this sensual-biblical experience by comparing Bernard’s use of memory with that of Augustine: ‘Linguistically, Bernard has worked a transformation in the future tense. Augustine may have said that there was only a present of things future, with tenses existing artificially in grammar. But Bernard actually transformed a tensed grammar into a vehicle that gave much greater weight to a converted present. The past and future for Bernard seem quite extraordinarily flattened into a present that is only initially distinguished by a graduated progression towards a foreseeable and attainable goal. The past is to be purged, censured; the future is, in effect, to be realised as a similitude through discipline. The monastic method of scriptural exegesis, of reminiscent, near random associations of texts through verbal concords, along with allegorical interpretation of these texts, was so thoroughly absorbed by Bernard that it seems to have rendered his own extraordinary psychology tenseless, even when he still followed the rules of the artificial *ars grammatica* which prescribed the use of tenses. The penknife required to excise the blotches stained into one’s memory is the word; ‘your sins *are* forgiven’, rather than, your sins shall be forgiven!’

Augustine never believed that any monastery, any church, would succeed in being a coherent city of God on earth. The members of that true city could only be pilgrims, unique in their election to salvation. No true commonwealth could exist cohesively within history. Bernard’s monastic ideal, however, is the city of refuge’ (Coleman 1992: 186–7).

Augustine’s refusal to believe in the realisation of the city of God on earth makes his language of desire quite different from Bernard’s. In Bernard’s case, desire and, for that matter, his concept of time, is twisted—‘flattened’ in Coleman’s terminology—due to the material presence of monastic fulfilment. Through that same twist, however, new dimensions of desire, pilgrimage, past and future are introduced which cannot be called duplications of the former ones. It is only through a subtle analysis of the way Bernard rephrases notions of memory and oblivion as they figure on various semantic levels that one can try to grasp the dynamics of this (seemingly) tenseless psychology and language.

former self. That is not what monastic oblivion is about. In literary terms, neither his epic stories about his adventures in the world nor his lyrical songs about his former love life are supposed to undergo structural surgery. Monastic oblivion and conversion are more radical and less imperialistic than that. Rather than re-presenting the Ur-creation in a timeless present, the monastic experience restores the past—and, put in terms of space, the extra-mural world—by forgetting it. Thus being purged memory is freed, so to speak, from believing in the wrong myths, from having the wrong expectations, from imposing dimensions of eternity on that which is supposed to be just time. In short, it is granted a vision of space and time as the measured and created entities they are: ‘We see the dead daily mourn their dead, many tears, little profit...’

So much about the crystallisation of the extra-mural world, both religious and secular, seen from the distant, monastic viewpoint. But what are we to make of the crystal itself? How do we reconcile the simultaneous existence of the ‘timeless’ liturgical body of praying and singing monks on the one hand, and the extra-mural world of time and history on the other, with our claim that the epic of life, love and death is continued within the walls of the monastery? Exactly what, then, does monastic oblivion look like?

Before describing Bernard’s literary account of the liturgical calendar as the celebration of the monastic life, I shall first have to deal with the nature of love and death. Are they part of this celebration? Yes indeed, they are part, or, rather, they are being made part of the on-going mechanics of singing and praying, without, however, coinciding with them. As mentioned above, love and death in the monastery are contracted into the *figura* of the monk, in the case of Bernard the writing monk. In that contraction they do not lose their specific features nor are they reduced to a pale, spiritualised version of their former selves. In their new way of life their sensual past is gradually replaced by a new but equally sensual set of Scriptural images. As Jean Leclercq and others have pointed out, most of the early Cistercian monks knew the language of chivalry and courtly love from their pre-monastic experience.⁵ And, as Janet Coleman puts it, Bernard himself ‘evoked these chivalric and romance images from his own memory of his pre-

⁵ See Leclercq 1979 and Leclercq 1983.

monastic experiences to draw the minds of his similarly formed monks away from the world of literal experience'.⁶ However, extracted from the world of aggression and ill-directed passions and drawn within the circumference of the monastery, love and death are not simply transformed into a new, paradisiacal mode of being. Rather, losing, in the very act of contraction, their dimensions of spatial and temporal extension, they vanish into total oblivion. In other words, the monastic *figura* of the monk living in his mini-Jerusalem re-tells the same old drama of love and death, of happiness and sorrow, of tragedy and comedy by cutting a long story short and contracting it to the minuscule size of his new theatrical setting. Just as Philip had successfully taken a short cut on his way to Jerusalem, the monk is invited to do the same and forget about his former wanderings in the world—regardless of their possibly sacred nature as in the case of the journey to the Holy Land—by purging them of the superfluous dimensions of space and time.

Yet a discrepancy seems to remain between the picture of the singing and praying monks and the presence of 'worldly' notions such as love and death, however 'forgotten' they may be in their new dimensionless state. Is this body of celebrating monks not as self-sufficient as the uninterrupted nature of their *laus perennis* would seem to suggest? Why, then, does the *figura* of the monastic author feel the need—as he apparently does—to make additions to the mechanics of the monastic life by re-introducing, in his commentaries, the vicissitudes of life, love and death, thus once more establishing a link with the forgotten past?

It is not so difficult to prove that those are the wrong questions to ask since they mistakenly presuppose the possibility of a comparison, on an equal footing, between the monastery and the extra-mural world as if a circle were compatible with a line. Since contraction means that lines, that is, the dimensions of space and time, have become circular, however, we are invited to read Bernard's account of the monastic life in 'curvilinear', non-comparative terms.⁷

⁶ Coleman 1992: 177.

⁷ See the Introduction to Part IV and Chapter Seven (The Geometry of Christmas) for a detailed discussion of the mathematical structure of Bernard's thought.

How, then, do our singing and praying monks love and die? What is the story of their lives? As things stand, we have already been presented with telling examples of monastic comedy and tragedy in the figure of the sinful monk. Besides, in Sermon 23 on the Song of Songs Bernard, had told us the story of success and failure in love. Both the epic of the monk's wanderings and the lyricism of love in the Kings's *cubiculum* were seen to be governed by the curvilinear pattern of the monastery: the ladder of ascent and descent was reduced to the size of the circular, monastic site, whereas the bedchamber of the King was extended into the fields of the shepherd, without those stories being the less epic or lyrical for all that.

In the next two chapters I want to take this line of thought one step further. Before eventually reconstructing Bernard's picture of uninterrupted celebration, I break into the enclosed monastic site by placing on the circumference of that circle two concentrated incisions of emotion: love and death.⁸ The image of love, taken from the Sermons on the Nativity of the blessed Mary, consists of two lovers embracing each other in a violent, nocturnal meeting, the image of death consists of Bernard's lament in Sermon 26 on the Song of Songs about his deceased brother Gerard. Both images are secular, unadorned, *cru* in Lévi-Strauss' terminology. As such they cannot be reduced to the liturgical feast going on in the monastery. Rather they are felt as interruptions breaking the chain of the *laus perennis*. The image of the lovers' embrace is so 'hauntingly beautiful'⁹ as momentarily to exclude whatever spiritual and religious reminiscence they might be supposed to evoke, causing, as it were, our singing and praying monks to hold their breath. The image of death is so crudely powerful and physical as to cause Bernard to break off his running commentary on the Song of Songs and to shed the kind of natural tears which, from the monastic point of view, were to be judged so ineffectual: 'many tears, little profit...'

⁸ Being part of the circumference of the monastic circle, the question as to the sacred or profane, extra-mural or monastic origin of love and death has in a sense become irrelevant.

⁹ Those are the words Dronke uses to describe the impression the poem *Foebus abierat* made on him when he came across it in a Bodleian manuscript (Dronke 1984a: 167). See Chapter Four.

Both images tell the stories of broken dreams. For the intrusion of violent and uncontrollable emotions, such as love and death, undercut the monastic structure with the uncertainties of illusion, evanescence and failure. However magic the monastic garden may be, the oblivious contraction, by way of mental short cut, of life, love and death in the *figura* of the monk reveals its fragile and artificial status. To keep that place going, more is required from the monastic author than the skills of chant and prayer. His artful injection of violent and unadorned manifestations of love and death into the *unendliche Melodie* demands an entirely new grammar and syntax. Diverting the little beckons of his monastic paradise, Bernard will have to reorganise notions of reality and imagination and reintegrate them in a new concept of space, time, memory, shadows, desire and fulfilment while living up to his claim of already 'having crossed the vast and spacious sea in no time, of safely having landed in the Jerusalem of Clairvaux and having joined the choir of the angelic citizens'.

CHAPTER FOUR

LOVE

Shadows and Fog: The Sermons on the Virgin Mary

1. Introduction

In this chapter¹ I intend to test the 'hypothesis' formulated in the Introduction to Part III by raising the question as to the poetic qualities of Bernard's prose. If it is true that love enters the monastic world in an unadorned way, can we translate this fact into literary terms and detect traces of pure lyricism in Bernard's prose? I proceed as follows. In order to avoid being trapped in prematurely categorical statements about the nature of love I take my starting-point in a tenth-century love poem, the *Foebus abierat*, which, though containing allusions to the Song of Songs, is unambiguously profane in its meaning. Only in the end do I return to this poem in a final effort to determine whether or not lyrical elements similar to the basic love-process of the poem can be found in Bernard's prose.

My object is also to get a better grasp of the nature of spiritual love and its accompanying ascetic elements. I deal at length with the views of Etienne Gilson on this matter, first because of their influence and second because, in my opinion, they turn out to be too static. Using as a model the outdated concept of courtly love, I try to demonstrate that spiritual love does not differ from its profane counterpart as to its dynamic nature.

I then pursue the quest for poetic dynamism. In my analysis of the Sermons on the Praise of the Virgin Mother and the Sermon on the Nativity of the blessed Mary I show that the literary setting of those sermons enables us to do justice to the openness of the text.

¹ An earlier version of this chapter has been published entitled 'The Virgin Mary and the Complexities of Love Language in the Works of Bernard of Clairvaux', *Cîteaux, Commentarii Cistercienses*, 40, 1989, 112-38.

It becomes clear that, in the new grammar and syntax of monastic memory and oblivion, the dynamics and vicissitudes of profane love can be maintained without damaging the integrity and secrets of spiritual, 'virginal' love.

2. *The Song of Songs and love-lyric*

The lyrical and dramatic quality of the Song of Songs has been remarked upon throughout history. In the words of Peter Dronke:

Already in the early third century Origen in his Commentary had called the Canticle *epithalamium...dramatis in modum*, and it was this quality at once lyrical and dramatic to which the troubadour, and many other gifted medieval poets, responded. The dramatic aspect was also recognized in a number of manuscripts of the Canticle, from the eighth century onwards, in which rubrics apportioned the dialogue to bride, bridegroom and chorus...The dialogue is multivalent: thought, scene and emotion combine rhapsodically rather than by any principle known to formal rhetoric. The imagery is likewise multivalent: it reaches out into the natural world to express the beauty and bliss and sorrows of each lover, but also it reaches inward, into the imagination especially of the bride, and there it becomes enigmatic: the images of an external encounter there seem to resolve into erotic reveries, and these are suffused with an exaltation that makes it easy to see how this text, at every known stage of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, gave rise to mystical interpretations. Theologians, predictably, either ignored the erotic wellspring of such language or recognized it only in order to reject it. Yet inevitably this *fons hortorum* continued to flow in a poetic *hortus conclusus*, where mystical and sensual expressions and imagery grew together, a garden that was to be of lasting importance for the European imagination.²

² Dronke 1979 in Dronke 1984a: 215–16.

Both in his *Medieval Latin and the Rise of European Love Lyric*³ and in his *The Medieval Poet and his World*,⁴ Peter Dronke has given examples of this mysterious, two-fold way in which the Song of Song functioned in the Middle Ages. In both books, he discusses the following poem, one which may be called exemplary for the manner in which the original lyrical and dramatic flavour of the Song of Songs can show through:

*Foebus abierat subtractis cursibus;
equitabat soror effrenis curribus,
radios inferens silvanis fontibus,
agitando feras pro suis rictibus.
Mortales dederant membra soporibus.
Aprilis tempore quod nuper transiit
fidelis imago coram me adstitit,
me vocans dulciter pauxillum tetigit;
oppressa lacrimis vox eius deficit,
suspirans etenim loqui non valuit.
Illius a tactu nimis intremui,
velud exterrita sursum insilui,
extensis brachiis corpus applicui,
exsanguis penitus tota derigui
evanuit enim! nichil retinui!
Sopore libera exclamo fortiter:
"quo fugis, amabo? cur tam celeriter?
Siste gradum, si vis inibo pariter,
nam tecum vivere volo perhenniter!"
Mox me penituit dixisse taliter.
Aperte fuerant fenestre solii,
fulgebant pulcriter Diane radii
heu me, heu miseram! tam diu dolui,
fluxerunt per genas ploratus rivuli;
donec in crastinum nunquam abstinui.*

Phoebus had departed, his voyage past;
his sister was riding with unbridled span,
shedding her beams in forest springs,

³ Dronke 1968: 332–41.

⁴ Dronke 1976 in Dronke 1984a: 167–175.

stirring wild creatures to prey, jaws agape.
 Mortals had let their limbs sink into sleep.
 One night in the April that had just gone by
 the image of my true love stood before me;
 calling me softly, he touched me gently
 his voice failed him, overcome by tears,
 he gave such sighs that he could not speak.
 At his touch I trembled fearfully;
 as if in terror I started up,
 with outstretched arms I pressed my body to his,
 and then I froze, utterly drained of blood
 for he had vanished! I was holding nothing!
 Fully awake then, I cried out loud:
 "Where are you fleeing. I beg you, why so quickly?
 Only wait, if you will I too shall enter,
 or I want to live with you forever!"
 Soon I regretted having spoken so.
 The windows of the terrace had been open,
 the beams of Diana shone in all their beauty,
 while I in my wretchedness grieved ah so long.
 Streams of tears flowed down over my cheeks;
 till the next day my weeping never ceased.⁵

Apart from the classical reminiscences (mainly Ovid's *Heroides*)⁶
 it is the fifth chapter of the Song of Songs, as Dronke points out in
 an article called 'Learned Lyric and Popular Ballad',⁷ that seems to
 show through in this poem:

Ego dormio, et cor meum vigilat
 I sleep but my heart waketh:
 it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying,
 Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled:
 for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of
 the night....
 My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door,
 and my bowels were moved for him.

⁵ English translation by Dronke 1984a: 167–8. Dronke dates the poem shortly before the year 1000. See Dronke 1976 in Dronke 1984a: 213.

⁶ Dronke 1976 in Dronke 1984a: 172–3.

⁷ Dronke 1979 in Dronke 1984a: 174.

I rose up to open to my beloved;
 and my hands dropped with myrrh,
 and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh,
 upon the handles of the lock
 I opened to my beloved,
 but my beloved had withdrawn himself and was gone.
 My soul failed when he spoke:
 I sought him, but I could not find him;
 I called him, but he gave me no answer.⁸

This poem is characterized by Dronke as follows:

The bride is awakened by the sound of her lover knocking on the door; trembling she opens for him, and suddenly he has vanished *at ille declinaverat et transierat* she is left searching for him, anguished and alone. It is the hallucinatory quality of this scene, its dreamlike movement, that lends the ballads a mysterious beauty. The Canticle could show poets an elliptical, evocative style, matching the emotional realm where the waking world merges with phantasmagoria.⁹

3. Courtly love and religious prose

So much for the influence of the Song of Songs on poetry. How is it handled in religious prose? Is it possible for the latter—most of the religious texts on the Song of Songs being prose—to express the enigmatic, dreamlike quality and the rhapsodical form of the love-lyric? An answer to this question is all the more difficult since it is the very simplicity and conciseness of love-poetry which, in the Christian commentaries on the Song of Songs, is shattered. Although some commentaries do contain lyrical elements that are mystical transpositions of originally profane love themes, the expository character of these texts also admits a systematic differentiation of other levels of meaning. God and Christ on the one hand, Mary,¹⁰ the soul and the church on the other, may

⁸ Cant. 5,2–6.

⁹ Dronke 1976 in Dronke 1984a: 174. Dronke argues convincingly that the poem suggests the lover to be dead rather than absent (Dronke 1968: 338).

¹⁰ Cf. Warner 1976: 121–33.

appear in the role of bridegroom and bride respectively. The non-erotic, 'virginal' nature of these religious personifications makes it even more difficult to retain the original bridal meaning.

In the past it has turned out to be very tempting to relate the virginal meaning of religious love to the characteristic elements of courtly poetry as they were defined by Gaston Paris¹¹ and others. Secrecy, servitude, obedience by the male to the female, and love as an *ars*—being the ingredients of courtly love—seemed to be perfectly congruent with the requirements of the chaste, religious love which had been realized and perfected in the person of the virgin Mary. For this reason some historians have sought the origin of courtly love in religious, and more particularly Cistercian, circles, which were especially devoted to the Virgin Mary.¹²

From a historical point of view, the origin of courtly love is no longer a problem. It is a widely held view that the above-mentioned elements of courtly love such as secrecy, suspense etc. are part of the pattern of love-lyric in general through the ages. Moreover, the extreme forms of courtly love, like the absolute inaccessibility of the lady and the withholding of the carnal union, are to be found in certain poems only, and cannot be regarded as a universal characteristic. As for the possibility of religious connotations in medieval love poetry: it has been pointed out that a better understanding of the medieval mind makes its tendency to associate the sacred with the profane and vice versa a less shocking and more obvious state of affairs. In the words of Peter Dronke:

The entire love-worship is based on the feeling that finite human love can, at its highest, have something more than human about it, that it is through a human beloved that the 'divine' concepts—paradise, salvation, eternity—take on meaning, that divinity hedges the beloved and can be experienced through her.¹³

¹¹ See for the definition: Paris 1912.

¹² This view has been taken up especially by Lewis 1936 and further applied in a highly speculative sense by Rougement 1939. For the mariological interpretation see Lot-Borodine 1928 in Lot-Borodine 1961: 71–88.

¹³ Dronke 1968: 4–5.

The imputed relation between sacred and profane love becomes interesting when we look at the way in which certain modern authors have rejected it in order to argue for the independence of religious love-language. The arguments used in such a rejection tell us a lot about the role, and especially about the limits, which the author ascribes to profane and sacred language. The classic example of this attitude of rejection is Etienne Gilson in the appendix to his masterly study on Bernard of Clairvaux: *La théologie mystique de saint Bernard*.¹⁴ Taking as his point of departure the book *Das Kulturproblem des Minnesang* (1909)¹⁵ by Eduard Wechssler, Gilson tackles the concept of courtly love as it had been defined by Andreas Capellanus. The latter's *Tractatus de amore*, a work inspired by Ovid's *Ars amatoria*, is one of the main sources of the traditional idea of courtly love as suspense of postponed fulfilment. Modern research has shown that this concept of courtly love should be regarded as a literary exaggeration.¹⁶ Gilson, however, still takes courtly love seriously, believing as he does that it is to be defined in the strong terms used by Andreas Capellanus:

And this love is pure which connects the hearts of the beloved by a total, affectionate love. This love exists in the contemplation of the mind and the affection of the heart. It proceeds to the oral kiss and the embracement of the arms and the touching of the nude mistress, with the omission of the final consolation. For whosoever wants to love in a pure way should not be occupied with this.¹⁷

Now Gilson appears to feel offended by the possibility, proposed by Wechssler and others, of there being a relation between sensual and spiritual love, or rather, by an interpretation of spiritual love in terms of sensuality. And even if one realizes that Capellanus is just playing games, it must be pointed out that satire does not play a role in Christian mysticism. In Gilson's view, it is not appropriate to relate the cult of sensuality, the apotheosis of desire, to the

¹⁴ Gilson 1947: 192–215 (Appendice IV: Saint Bernard et l'amour courtois).

¹⁵ Wechssler 1909.

¹⁶ For the disentanglement of Andreas Capellanus and courtly love see: Dronke 1968: 85 and Bumke 1986: 505–22. See also Marrou 1971 and Monson 1988.

¹⁷ Quoted by Gilson 1947: 210.

Christian faith. In addition, so Gilson challenges his opponents, it would still have to be demonstrated that the concept of courtly love is a sensual transposition of the concept of mystical love as developed by someone like Bernard. As for this last aspect, it is clear that Gilson was right. In a historical sense, as we saw, it cannot be proven that courtly love developed out of the (Cistercian) concept of religious love.

According to Gilson, however, there exists something worse than the vulgarity of the contamination of religious love by sensuality. That is the fact that the *praetermisso extremo solatio*—the withholding or postponement of erotic fulfilment in Andreas Capellanus' terms—is called *amor purus*. Such a designation overlooks the fact that, in the realm of religion, the possibility that a spiritual marriage remains unconsummated must be excluded. The inaccessibility of the lady in courtly love is the exact opposite of the Christian God, who took the initiative of loving man. The central experience in Christian mysticism is God's accessibility to man as expressed by the metaphor of a mystical, marital union.

Ce que les poètes courtois désignent de ce nom (amour), n'est aux jeux des mystiques chrétiens que le désir.¹⁸

In other words, *amor purus* is to be seen as the fulfilment of love rather than the postponement of fulfilment. In Gilson's view there is nothing worse than (courtly) love which, unable to give up its state of desire, is never certain of being fulfilled and is therefore dominated by fear.

Gilson's approach to spiritual love raises the question of the literary quality of religious texts. Up to now we have looked at the possibility of a religious association showing through in profane literature such as the *Joebus abierat*, and this led to the conclusion that secular poetry could indeed contain religious elements without losing its literary, lyrical nature. The question can now be asked if the opposite of this conclusion is also true: is it possible for religious texts to have an erotic and lyrical sense without ceasing to be religious? In Gilson's view the answer is negative. Apart from his moral indignation at the idea of a mixture of the sensual with the spiritual, there is the claim that religious development is a

¹⁸ Gilson 1947: 203.

schematic process which hurries on to fulfilment. It is interrupted only by the idea of the *regio dissimilitudinis*—i.e. the description of man's earthly state which is completely different not only from his state of being in heaven but also from the original condition of man's life on earth. In terms of natural love, that fulfilment is the marital union; religiously speaking, it is the mystical one. According to Gilson, to remain in the phase of unfulfilled desire leads to a distorted view of love, and implies a refusal to find one's happiness in the (spiritual) state of marriage, being the union with God.

Mystical union and fulfilment do play their part in the religious works of Bernard of Clairvaux, of course. But not to recognize the latter's literary quality and fundamental multi-dimensionality, which is also the characteristic of dramatic and lyrical poetry, as Gilson does, seems wrong to me. This multi-dimensionality presupposes a readiness and ability to accept momentary experience (e.g. the experience of the nocturnal loss of the beloved in the *Foebus abierat*) for what it is, without denying that its quality and beauty is created by the possibility—in the case of the poem: the lost possibility—of union and fulfilment. In terms of Bernardine spirituality, this means the acceptance of the human state as the *regio dissimilitudinis*—very well described by Gilson¹⁹—a state that contains desire as well as fulfilment.

A static view of mysticism as a matter of permanent spiritual union in marriage²⁰ denies the possibility of both the literary multi-dimensionality of Bernard's text and what I see to be the simultaneity of fulfilment and desire. If one imposes a stereotype of fulfilment on the experience of marriage, there is no mystery left nor is there any dramatic tension. In the dramatic and lyrical quality of Bernard's texts, however, this sense of mystery remains and is intensified by the suggestion of the simultaneous overwhelming presence, as well as absence, of the beloved.

¹⁹ Gilson 1947: 48–77 deals with the *regio dissimilitudinis* as the substratum of human existence.

²⁰ It is especially Jean Leclercq who, on the one hand, emphasizes the affinities between spiritual and courtly love (Leclercq 1979: *passim*) and, on the other, sees both modes of love as 'chaste marriage' (Leclercq 1983: 110–11)). Against the threat of an 'amour passager' he maintains the almost sacramental notion of (consummated) marriage.

One last remark before examining his text more closely. In trying to defend multi-dimensionality Bernard's text does not imply the reduction of religious categories to literary ones. The presupposition of this approach is that within the monastic realm—in Gilson's terms, within the *paradisus claustralis*²¹—the distance between God and man, between fulfilment and desire is not measured in schematic terms. The very fact that the monastery is a simultaneous reflection of both perfection and imperfection, of both the absence of the divine and presence, of light and darkness, makes it possible to describe it with categories of human love. In other words, love in the *paradisus claustralis*, which at the same time represents the *regio dissimilitudinis*, does not merely emphasize the notion of *dissimilitudo*, distance and difference. Rather, it suggests a form of love which hovers between *similitudo* and *dissimilitudo*, that is on the brink of being fulfilled as well as of being postponed. And it is that monastic, quasi-perfect state which can be described by means of the notion of simultaneity, and which finds its image and likeness in the vicissitudes of human love. In that very process religious or sacred and human profane language are neither separated nor can they be reduced to one another. Within the reference of the enclosed space of the *paradisus claustralis*, and drawing on an unlimited variety of linguistic configurations, Bernard's texts present the contours of experiences as irreducible as poetry. Out of this linguistic variety spring hitherto unknown combinations of love and virginity which, in their enigmatic quality, recall the mystery of the divine Word. It is not from a preconceived doctrine that these almost atomic elements are derived, nor can the references to love be considered as a mere spiritualisation of erotic language. A new situation arises in which different elements of language are clustered afresh, and in which even the erotic element is not necessarily suppressed. This process indeed reminds one of the creation of poetry, the only difference being that the imaginary material out of which Bernard's 'poem' is distilled is presented along with the 'poem' itself.

Gilson's view of spiritual love shows that marriage as a religious, sacramental state as distinguished from the uncertainties of *languor*

²¹ The title of Gilson's fourth chapter: Gilson 1947: 108–41.

and desire, tends to deprive love of its dynamic qualities. The monastic experiment, however, does not take place in the chaste presence of the divine alone. Rather, it should be seen as a permanent confrontation of the confused existence of the *regio dissimilitudinis* with the perfection of the divine presence. Here it might be useful to recall the image of the monastic site as it has been evoked in the Introduction to this book. In the same way that the monastery represents the containment of darkness and chaos within the bounds of architectural brightness and form,²² the spiritual love life of the Cistercian monk includes desire as well as fulfilment without the one being absolutely prior or posterior to the other.

This having been said, the possibility that themes from the world of courtly love can be used as literary models in Bernard's work may be investigated. The most important elements in courtly love can be expressed at a rhetorical level without being hampered either by the demand for historical truth or by the narrow limits of religious, schematic language. Love's secrecy, the unfulfilled desire, the inaccessibility of the beloved leading to languor, servitude and the difficult nature of the quest for the lady, all these characteristics can be viewed as constitutive elements in the rhetorical corpus of Bernard. Or, to sum all this up in one Bernardine phrase: *Dilectio*, love is a *modus sine modo*, a measure without measure.²³ As such it can be regarded as a dynamic principle, in form as well as in content. This does not mean, however, that love is not also seen as striving towards a state of peace in which it exists because of itself.²⁴ This final state, in terms of the Song of Songs, is the enjoyment of the presence of the bridegroom himself, who can only be found through love in the manner of the *modus sine modo*.

It is my intention to demonstrate how, in Bernard's work, this model (*modus sine modo*) clusters and holds together the different and seemingly scattered elements we have dealt with so far: achievement, desire, mysticism.²⁵ In the end I hope that the apparently diffuse quality of Bernard's experience will appear

²² For a detailed analysis of Cistercian monastic sites, see Auburger 1986.

²³ Dil I 1; SBOP III: 120–1.

²⁴ Dil IX 26; X 27; SBOP III: 140–3.

²⁵ In the Chapter Seven I shall use the concept of *modus sine modo* when trying my hand at a 'geometrical' analysis of Bernard's imagery.

transparently ordered when the different elements of the *modus sine modo* are seen to have their firm and clear reflection in images in human memory. It is in the latter that the control room can be found from which human imagery is directed and manipulated. Bernard's chief image in the realm of love, the Virgin Mary, is central in this process. What does Bernard say about Mary in terms of love, and more specifically, does he say anything about her in the context of the *Canticle*? Does she, standing between God and man, represent the ambiguities of love? And if so, can she be regarded as Bernard's vehicle for expressing those ambiguities on a level on which there is no need to sanction this state of affairs by introducing one-dimensional schemes of religious language?

4. *The Virgin Mary by day: the Sermons on the Praise of the Virgin Mother*

It is a wellknown fact that the Virgin Mary occupies a privileged position in Bernard's work. Therefore it seems all the more striking that her name, contrary to what might be expected, very rarely appears in the *Sermons on the Song of Songs*.²⁶ This fact should increase our awareness of the complexities of Bernard's language: its essential characteristic is that meaning is arrived at in indirect ways rather than by a straightforward exposition of allegorical or tropological significance. Mary is present in the same indirect way in these as the erotic themes are present in his *Sermons on the Canticle*. In these sermons, exactly where one would expect, however allusively, something like an erotic notion, one is confronted with an unexpectedly dry and down to earth religious interpretation.²⁷ In the same way we learn nothing about Mary if we look for her in the figure of the bride in the *Sermons on the Song of Songs*.

It might be argued that Mary's absence in the *Sermons on the Song of Songs* is a matter of genre.²⁸ However true that may be,

²⁶ Cf. Ohly 1958: 150–1.

²⁷ Cf. Bynum 1984: 147. In general the chapter 'Jesus as mother and abbot as mother' (110–69) is of interest for my argument.

²⁸ For a discussion of 'genre' with regard to the commentaries on the *Song of Songs*, see Matter 1990: 3–19.

it cannot be considered a sufficient explanation, since other theologians such as Rupert of Deutz, did not hesitate to identify her with the bride of the Song of Songs.²⁹ The least that can be said about this subject is that Bernard has combined a certain consistency of genre with a freedom to introduce biblical persons. As far as those biblical persons are concerned, it should be noticed that in Bernard's rhetorical and exegetical technique, the more these persons are embedded in—and at the same time contrasted with—another level of, preferably biblical, language, the sharper their contours are. It is one thing, for example, to move around in the context of the Song of Songs and to explain it in many different ways and on many different levels. It is quite another, however, to be confronted in Bernard's sermons with the text of the Song of Songs, as an undercurrent reference, and even as a veiled description of biblical persons. In that sense the Song of Songs is indeed applied by Bernard to the Virgin Mary. Or, to put it in even stronger terms, it is in the Sermons on the Virgin Mary, in which the text of the Canticle is not the actual subject, but only a substratum, that the Song of Songs seems to have retained much more of its original flavour than in Bernard's sermons specifically devoted to the Canticle, in which it is subjected to an expository explanation.

As indicated, one of the finest examples of the Song of Songs as an almost poetic understream may be found in the Sermons in praise of the Virgin Mother, where Mary is addressed as follows:

You heard that you will conceive and that you will give birth to a son. You heard that it will happen, not through a man but through the Holy Ghost. The Angel is awaiting an answer. For the time has come for him to return to the one who sent him. It is in the same manner that we, o Mistress, are waiting for the word of mercy in a state in which we are miserably held down by the sentence of damnation. And, behold, to you is offered the price of our salvation. If you consent, we will be freed at once. We have all been created in the eternal Word of God, and, behold, we are dying. It is in your short answer that we are to be restored in order to be called back to life.

²⁹ See Van Engen 1983: 291–8.

Merciful Virgin, this the lamentable Adam begs of you; the same Adam, who together with his miserable off-spring is exiled from paradise. This Abraham, David and all the other Fathers beg of you; these Fathers, who are your Fathers too, living in the realm of the shadow of death. It is this that the whole world, kneeling for you, is awaiting. And that is not without reason since it is on the words of your mouth that depend the consolation of the miserable, the redemption of those imprisoned, the liberation of the reprobate, in short, the salvation of all the sons of Adam, i.e. of all your race. Virgin, answer quickly! Mistress, give as an answer the Word for which the earth, hell and heaven are waiting. Even the King and Lord of the universe has greatly desired your beauty, in the same way as he also wishes for your positive answer in which he intends to save the world. And since you already pleased him in silence, you will please him even more by speaking out, as He Himself has cried out to you from heaven: 'O thou fairest among women, cause me to hear your voice' (Cant. 1,7; 8,13). For if you cause Him to hear your voice, he will cause you to see our salvation. Is this not what you were seeking, what you were sighing about, what you were longing for day and night (cf. Cant. 3,4)? Well then! It is you to whom this promise has been made, or do we look for another (Matthew 11,3)? Indeed, it is you yourself and not another woman. You, I say, who have been promised, who have been expected, who have been wished for, you from whom your holy father Jacob, on his deathbed, was hoping for eternal life, saying: 'Lord, I shall expect your salvation'. It is in her and through her that God himself, our King, before the beginning of the world, has decided to work His salvation in the midst of the earth. Why do you expect from another woman what is offered to you? Why do you expect from another woman what will soon be made manifest, if you only give your assent and if you only answer the Word. Therefore, answer the Angel quickly, and through him, God. Answer in a word and receive the Word: bring forth your own word and receive the divine one: speak a transitory word and embrace the eternal one. Why do you hesitate? Why do you tremble? Believe, confess and receive. May humility take on daring and diffidence become

confidence. It is in no way becoming now for the virginal simplicity to forget prudence. Prudent Virgin, it is only in this case that there is no reason for you to fear presumption. For, although prudence pleases God in silence, at present it is more necessary to be pious in speaking out. Blessed Virgin, open your heart to faith, your lips to confession, your body to the Creator. Look, he for whom all nations have been longing is standing outside, knocking on your door (Revelation 3,20; cf. Cant. 5,2). O, do not let your hesitation cause him to pass by! Then you would start to wander again, looking for him whom your soul loves (Cant. 3,1–4)! Rise, run and open! Rise in faith, run in devotion and open your heart in confession!' (Miss 4 IV 8)

The most striking aspect of this passage is its dramatic form that culminates in the last images: the knocking on the door, the nocturnal wandering in the streets. In this dramatic and dialogic structure, the evocative and elliptic quality of the Song of Songs itself is evoked. In spite of the scarce, actual quotations from the Song of Songs, its presence is strongly felt throughout the passage and accentuated by the sudden, fragmentary occurrences of the actual text. It is clear that Bernard appeals to the reader or listener's conditioned capacity to let his feelings about the Gospel words concerning Mary be coloured by the quality of the love-lyric of the Song of Songs.

In Bernard's handling of the framework of the love-language of the Song of Songs, amazingly enough, a fundamental lack of erotic meaning should be noted. As it is here described, the conception of Christ in Mary is, the erotic language notwithstanding, an asexual event, not only as a religious fact but also as it is here expressed in erotic terms. Something has happened in this text which cannot be explained, not even with the help of the notion of chaste and courtly love. It is her very chastity and virginity that made Mary's conception of Christ possible. In literary terms: this passage has a hieratic, almost liturgical quality. It is reminiscent of the tenth-century antiphon on Mary in which her presence is evoked in the poetic language of the Song of Songs.

Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon,
clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banners (Cant.

6,10)? Return, return, that we may look upon thee (Cant. 6,13)...Thy name is as ointment poured forth (Cant. 1,3)...I am black but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem; Therefore, the king hath loved me, the king hath brought me into his chambers (Cant. 1,4–5)...His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me (Cant. 8,3).³⁰

Fascinating as this may be, what we are left with is a reduction of the complex meaning of love-language. Admittedly, there is desire and suspense. However, the way in which Mary's virgin conception is the subject of the discourse is in a sense too clear to allow for the linguistic complexities, for the hide-and-seek, of love games.³¹

What exactly are these complexities? In order to find an answer to this question one must realize that the monastic setting of the Bernardine texts represents an 'inverted world'. By this I mean that what religiously speaking, might be first—such as the concept of God, man or biblical persons—is not necessarily so in a monastic context. In a Cistercian environment for example, the linguistic, 'figural' context may precede, evoke, and be the carrier of further religious content. It is, ultimately, the priority of the *figura* containing the different personifications of the human and the divine which enables the author to locate his *dramatis personae* in an environment of both aridity and fertility, abundant fulfilment of love and ascetic remoteness, absence and presence, to intersperse his love-language with non-erotic elements. As we have seen in the analysis of Sermon 23 on the Song of Songs, the concept of *figura* ultimately manifests itself in the monastery in the shape of the bride and groom embracing one another. However, to get hold of this ultimate *figura*, the person of the virgin Mary residing between the searching lovers without herself being distinctly identical with either of them, is needed, as the gate through which fulfilment and suspense, fertility and virginity, are to be telescoped in one single image. If we succeeded in grasping this image, we would, in however preliminary a fashion, get an insight into the ongoing on the monastic site. Of course, the distinction between general religious language and the particular monastic/Cistercian use of it

³⁰ *Corpus Antiphonalium Officii* vol. III, # 4425. Cf. Leclercq 1979: 38–40, 49, 50 and Matter 1990: 153–4, 171.

³¹ Cf. Leclercq 1979: 38–40, 49–50.

is an artificial one, but in its very artificiality it reminds us again of the architecture of the Cistercian church and monastery. The empty, unadorned space within which the monastic life is set is the backdrop against which the familiar religious images appear.³² In the same way, the continuous and all-pervasive, though not obvious and only rarely visible, presence of the quality of the Song of Songs underlies Bernard's treatment of religious persons and themes. Before, or even instead of being elucidated by clear and unambiguous scriptural explanation, those persons and themes may first have to be drawn into a deeper darkness of the monastic emptiness or night in which, as it turns out, their daylight identity originates.

5. *The Virgin Mary by night: the Sermon on the Nativity of the blessed Virgin*

Let us start this new attempt to trace the contours of Mary's role in the salvation of mankind as described in the texts of Bernard by quoting the following passage:

Fight with the angel lest you succumb (Genesis 32,24), for the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force (Matthew 11,12). Or, is this not a fight: 'My beloved is mine, and I am his (Cant. 2,16)'? He reveals his love; may he

³² Cf. Gilson 1947: 81–2. 'En dépit de son redoutable ascétisme, saint Bernard n'a jamais versé dans le puritanisme littéraire; les murs de son monastère sont nus, mais non pas son style...Ces Cisterciens ont renoncé à tout sauf à l'art de bien écrire; chacun de ces redoutables ascètes porte en soi un humaniste qui ne veut pas mourir'. This remark has become rather famous. Unfortunately, Gilson does not try to resolve this antithesis between architectural and literary style. As I have pointed out in the Introduction to this book, my aim is to catch, in Bernard's language, the simultaneity of austerity and abundance. Slightly changing Gilson's phrase, one might say that for Bernard it is the 'humanist who wants to die' who figures prominently in his writings. See Chapter Five dealing with Bernard's lament over the death of his brother. On that occasion he quotes Terence's famous *nihil humanum mihi alienum puto* only to associate this human element with the Pauline 'man sold under sin'. It is Bernard's literary ambition to give an adequate description of this man dominated by wildness, aridity and disorder as well as by the sublime form of the divine order. Consequently, the humanist element in Bernard's writings should not be seen as intrinsically alien to the ascetic puritanism. Rather it is part and parcel of the Bernardine *Gesamttheater*.

also experience yours. For the Lord your God tempts you in many things. Often he draws back from you and turns his face away, but not in anger. When it happens it is a test rather than a rejection. The beloved has held you; may you hold your beloved too; hold him and act vigorously. Your sins have not overpowered him; may his punishments fail to overwhelm you and you will be blessed. But when will all this happen? When dawn comes, when the day is about to break, when He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth. It is written: behold, a man wrestled with Jacob until the morning. Make me hear your mercy in the morning, because I put my hope in you, o Lord. I shall not be silent, neither shall I give you silence until the morning, nor shall I fast. May you [reader, listener] truly be found worthy to pasture, but among the lilies. My beloved is mine and I am his; he is the one who pastures among the lilies (Cant. 2,16).³³ (Nat B.V.M. 16)

Jacob's fight with the angel (Genesis 32,22–32) is represented here as the image of the mutual *beata possessio* of lovers. That seems, indeed, to be a very complex comparison. A first and most simple explanation can be given by referring to the monastic implications. The nocturnal struggle with the angel which in the end evokes the lover's song of praise may suggest the early lauds by means of

³³ Cf. Rupert of Deutz, Prologue to his Commentary on the Song of Songs. Rupert also quotes the Genesis-passage together with the text from Matthew 11,12: 'Qui contra hominem similem sibi luctatur aut in agone contendit opus habet fortitudine corporis, ut athleta victor existens iusta laurea mereatur coronari. Porro qui cum deo et regno caelorum vim inferre praesumit, alia et meliori fortitudine opus habet, scilicet fortitudine mentis...Exemplum laudandae huius fortitudinis habemus in patre nostro Iacob, quemadmodum Scriptura dicit: "Cumque mature surrexisset Iacob, traductis omnibus, quae ad se pertinebant, remansit solus: et ecce vir lauctabatur com eo usque mane".'

See Van Engen 1983: 291–3: 'In his commentary on the Song of Songs composed just a year or so after *De victoria Verbi Dei* (1125), he finally made it explicit in the first consistently Marian interpretation of that love song ever to appear in Christendom...Then early in the 1120's Abbot Cuno asked him to prepare a meditation on this...Rupert described himself as wrestling with the Word of God to wring out of this song a work which would both celebrate the incarnate Lord and honour the blessed Virgin...Liturgical uses had prepared the way for a Marian interpretation of the Song of Songs. Readings from the Song were assigned to the feasts for Mary's assumption (August 15) and Nativity (September 8).'

which the monastic community breaks the silence of the night. This passage is preceded by a lengthy exposition on *silentium*, the theory and practice of which, as we have seen in Chapter Four, was more than familiar to the Cistercian monk.

One ought to be silent in the face of superfluous talk. The very same silence, however, is supposed to create a spiritual tension which brings about the eruption of the poetic language of the Psalms or the Song of Songs.

‘Keep not silence,’ I say, ‘and give Him no rest.’ Speak, in order that He himself may speak and is able to say: my beloved is mine and I am his. *Iucunda vox et eloquium dulce...* And do not say: how shall we sing a song for the Lord in a foreign country? For she will not be thought foreign about whom the bridegroom says: The voice of the turtledove has been heard in our country (Cant. 2,12). For she had heard him say: Catch the little foxes for us (Cant. 2,15). This is perhaps the reason why he rejoiced and said: ‘my beloved is mine, and I am His’. (Nat B.V.M. 15)

Although it is my intention to demonstrate in what follows that this passage contains all the elements of what we have called the complexities of (courtly) love-language, its structure as such cannot be considered obscure. The leitmotif in this section of the sermon is the text from the Song of Songs:

Dilectus meus mihi et ego tibi, qui pascitur inter liliis/My beloved is mine, and I am yours; you who pastures amongst the lilies (Cant. 2,16).

This text is cut into halves in order to create a feeling of suspense in the reader. In the meantime all sorts of combinations of images circling around this text are tried out until the *Dilectus meus*-quote regains its unity when it rejoins the *pascitur inter lilia*. The actual meaning of lilies is passed over in silence, although to the reader and listener the name of the person who is to be connected with lilies is well-known. It is only later after the author has been playing around with different possible meanings, that Mary—who is the subject of the sermon—is mentioned as the true and only lily in whose proximity one should pasture.

The image of Jacob's fight with the angel is broken and suspended in the same way as the phrase *Dilectus meus*. 'Fight with the angel.' The familiarity of the monk and listener with this biblical scene must have been sufficient to enable him to have it completely and vividly in mind as soon as the words *Ecce et vir luctabatur* are mentioned. On the surface, however, the story is fragmented and suspended. One catches words from the story (words such as *nox* and *aurora*, which have a poetic effect of their own) until about ten lines later its nucleus is then fully revealed when the first words are literally quoted:

Ecce vir luctabatur cum Iacob usque ad mane/And behold, a man wrestled with Jacob until the breaking of the day (Genesis 32,24).

Roughly speaking, this is the structure of the passage. Now the question can be raised as to the sudden origin of this nocturnal scene in the sermon. What is its place within this context? In the preceding lines, which are marked by the repetition of the *Dilectus meus mihi* something like a looming darkness has been hinted at. There is a sudden emphasis on the separation between the lovers as if a dark cloud before the sun has obscured the earth. In terms of the Song of Songs:

My beloved is mine and I am his. It clearly is the voice of the turtle dove, who, both in life and death, is uniquely chaste and faithful to her partner so that neither life nor death can separate her from the love of Christ...Dense clouds tried to obscure the beams of the sun. But the sun has become warm and dissolved it all. How could it otherwise have happened that you returned to him, unless he had persevered and shouted: 'Return, o Sunamite, return, return in order that we may see you' (Cant 6,12)? Therefore do not be less faithful to him lest you be turned away from him through punishment or labour. (Nat B.V.M. 15)

So much, for the time being, about the set of images around the central scene of the nocturnal struggle with the angel. Before attempting a further analysis, attention must be paid to the context of these images.

In the Sermon on the Nativity of the blessed Virgin Mary Bernard tries to outline the position of the Virgin. Here we must

remind the reader once more of what has been said above about the priorities in monastic language. In the eyes of Bernard, as in the eyes of every believer, Mary was, of course, in the first place a personified doctrine. However, from a historiographical point of view this picture should be refined: Bernard's thought and language is primarily monastic. And, as is indicated in the same sermon, monastic language is the breaking of silence, i.e. the silence which stops the loudness of the confused world of non-monastic imagination. Against the mainstream of common language it proclaims what has been said about God and man. In monastic language what is at stake here is the image of a person rather than the personified doctrine, someone who is the culmination as well as the access to, an immeasurably rich world of imagination. She lightens the mind as the day lights up the world out of the night:

She who comes forth as the rising dawn, beautiful as the moon, sublime as the sun.³⁴

She firmly holds the world in her grasp. This state of affairs is succinctly expressed in the opening words of the sermon:

Heaven embraces the presence of the fertile Virgin, the earth worships her memory. So truly the exposition of good is to be found in heaven, and on earth its memory. There an abundance, here a small sacrifice of the first fruits; there the real thing, here the word denoting it. For it is written, Lord, your name lasts for ever and your memory passes from generation to generation...Do you want to know why his name and his memory are in us but his presence only in heaven? For Christ said: this is the way you ought to pray: Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. A prayer full of faith, the first words of which remind us that we are not yet in heaven but peregrinating far away from God...Under His shadow shall we live among the heathen. For life among the celestial blessed ones will not be in shadows but, rather in brightness. For it is written 'in the splendour of the saints and out of my womb did I give birth to you before Lucifer'. This is the truth about the

³⁴ *QUAE PROCEDIT SICUT AURORA CONSURGENS, PULCHRA UT LUNA, ELECTA UT SOL.* This text from the Canticum 6,9 runs through the sermon as a refrain.

Father. The mother, however, has brought forth the same splendour, but in the shadow, with which the most High overshadowed her. Therefore the church (not the church of the saints in the celestial splendour, but the church peregrinating on earth) is right to sing as follows: 'Thus in the shadow of him for whom I have been longing I sat down, and his fruit is sweet to my palate.' (Nat B.V.M. 1)

Here the sound of the Song of Songs is audible again. Whosoever, looking for doctrinal information about Mary, neglects this poetic undercurrent, does not do justice to the meaning of Bernard's work. Admittedly, interesting remarks about Mary are being made in this sermon. To give an example, she is depicted as the mediatrix between God and man.

Do you want to have an advocate with God? Go to Mary. Because her humanity is pure, not only pure through the lack of all contamination but pure by the uniqueness of her nature, her Son will hear the prayer of his mother, in the same way as the Father will hear the prayer of his Son. (Nat B.V.M. 7)

Further, one finds expressions with regard to the virginity of Mary in the form of traditional symbols: the enclosed garden, the sealed well, the rod of Aaron, the fleece of Gideon. This, however, is not the information which structures the sermon. It is the person of the Virgin herself which holds together the different and seemingly incoherent images: the Virgin as she is described in the opening sentence: *Fecundae virginis amplexitur caelum praesentiam* and as she continues in the form of the shadow (*umbra*) of the Psalm and the Song of Songs. As when one enters a dimly-lit church from the light day outside, the shadow-like image, its radiation and colour are the first things to catch the eye. In this sermon it is exclusively within this context of Mary as the one in and through whom the human mind can perceive divine reality that these associative clusters of images make sense. Being the carrier of celestial perfection and plenitude, Mary reflects the cosmic splendour of heaven on earth. A large section of this sermon deals with this subject on the basis of the metaphor of the aqueduct (the subtitle of the sermon). As a bridge between heaven and earth, this aqueduct guarantees communication between God and man. At the same time, breaking out of this artificial framework, Mary wanders around like

the bride of the Song of Songs, knocking on the door, asking and searching during the night. The cosmic, liturgical image of Mary *pulchra ut luna, electa ut sol* is more or less interiorized. What happens here cannot be rendered in mere liturgical terms, where this special form of multi-dimensionality is lacking. By means of a simple change in lighting, the Virgin changes from the splendid heavenly queen into the shadowlike form and coverage of the word which has become flesh. What seems to happen here is a spontaneous movement of the poetic mind from the splendour of heaven to the darkness of the earth. In fact, however, Bernard manoeuvres in a very technical way. On the one hand, he is confronted with a multitude of seemingly unconnected images of things human and divine. On the other, he knows for certain that the Virgin Mary has an important role to play in the communication process between the different sets of images. Those different elements are brought together and concentrated in the incarnation of God in Christ, whose humanity will be revealed exclusively by the Virgin Mary.

Bernard continues,

But your thought is with you and we do not know what is in your mind. (Nat B.V.M. 10)

As such, human thought about the divine is empty and without direction. It is only the Word which fills the emptiness and activates the human mind.

The Word has become flesh and lives in us. For it clearly lives by faith in our hearts, it lives in our memory, it lives in our thought and it descends to the seat of imagination itself. How else would a man be able to think about God, unless it were by letting his heart fashion idols? (Nat B.V.M. 10)

In other words, memory, thought and imagination are to be considered the vehicles by which faith is grasped and realized.

A two-fold conclusion can be drawn from the above-mentioned state of affairs. In the first place it appears that what hitherto was invisible and incomprehensible, suddenly can be seen, or, rather, reproduced by the human imagination. For example, the mind can be filled with the memories of scenes from the life of Christ: Christ

in the manger, in the womb of his mother, preaching on the mountain, dead among the dead and resurrected.

Bernard says,

Whichever of those things I think, I think God and through all things He is my God. I have called the contemplation of this wisdom, and in my opinion it is wise to bring back the memory of this sweetness, which the priestly rod had brought forth in great quantities, the sweetness which Mary drinks in heaven and gives abundantly to us. (Nat B.V.M. 11)

In other words, it is the figure of Mary in whom earth and heaven overlap, that gives form to this thought imagination and this memory. Functioning as a guiding, overall image in the service of mankind, she can be seen again as the queen of heaven, as the dawning of the day *quae procedit sicut aurora consurgens, pulchra ut luna, electa ut sol*.

Secondly, the fact that the images of memory are to be regarded as the meditative product of faith implies that it is impossible clearly to distinguish between the subject and the object of imagination. If any distinction can be made at all, it will have to be made in terms of light and darkness rather than of presence and absence, real and imagined. This conclusion enables us to reintroduce the distinction between *res/reality* and *nomen/words*, splendour and shadows, which now appears to have been the keynote around which the sermon was composed. Human language and imagination contemplate the divine in a manner that has the very same evanescence and limitations as the dynamics of love, *modus sine modo*, world without end.

In the following section, Bernard elaborates on the theme of the character of love and desire, referring once more to the position and behaviour of the bride in the Song of Songs:

Furthermore, brethren, our main concern must be that the Word which has gone forth out of the mouth of the Father through the mediation of the Virgin will not return unto Him empty (Isaiah 55,11). May we rather recompense grace with grace through the same Virgin. Let us bring back the memory while we long for His presence and the streams of the gifts of grace are returned to their origin, so that they may flow more abundantly. For unless they return to their source they will dry

up—in which case we who have been unfaithful in something small (Luke 19,17) do not deserve to receive that which is great. For it is clear that memory is not worth much in admiring the presence nor in achieving that which we long for, but it is much compared with that which we deserve. It is far less than our desire, but nevertheless far beyond our merit. That is why the bride is very wisely most grateful for this little. For she says: ‘Show me where you pasture, where you sleep at midday (Cant. 1,6)’, preferring little instead of great things. And for the midday meal she pours out an evening sacrifice (Psalm 140,2); and she does not grumble at all, as sometimes happens or become sad, but she is grateful and shows herself more devoted in everything. For she knows that if she has been faithful in the shadow of memory, she will be sure to reach the light of his presence. (Nat B.V.M. 13)

Once again it is the *umbra memoriae* ‘shadow of memory’ as opposed to the *lux praesentiae* ‘light of presence’ which is characteristic of human language and imagination. To put it in monastic/Cistercian terms: the outline of Mary’s statue remains visible, but in an environment in which the light has been slightly shaded. The language which is being spoken here, dependent as it is on the mediation of the Virgin, is neither autonomous nor is it a reflection of a broader world outside the monastery. In this space, speech means the breaking of monastic silence. And in its turn this silence is the expression of a continuous movement driven on by the restlessness of the *infra desiderium*, the feeling of a falling short of ones’ goal. *Modicum*, modest: that is the way Bernard describes this play of shadows. One knows little compared to what one will know in the heavenly state, and the power of imagination seems to be minimized: it is form rather than substance, shadow rather than light. And yet it is within this very same monastic space that the shape of the beloved becomes visible.

Following this passage the text

Qui reminiscimini Domini ne taceatis, et ne detis silentium illi/Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest (Isaiah 62,6–7)

provides ample opportunity for a digression on language. It is clear that the call not to be silent before God is in complete accordance with the status of human knowledge as the shadow of memory.

With this shadow-like context in mind, let us return to the text which is at the centre of our reading of the sermon:

Fight with the angel lest you succumb, because the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent rob it. Or is that not a fight: 'My beloved is mine and I am his'?

Again, what we do know is that the text *Dilectus meus mihi et ego tibi qui pascitur inter lilia* is the main theme in this section of the sermon. The explanation of *lilia* is postponed for a long time before being revealed in the end as the 'splendour of virginity', in other words, the Virgin Mary. Whatever will be said about the nature of love in the scene of the *Dilectus meus*, comes together in the end in the only recognisable daylight-like figure of Mary. But what exactly is the nature of the love which includes the lilies of virginity?

Nothing sensible can be said on this subject as such. After what has been stated about the monastic setting of Bernard's language, priority must be given to the nocturnal meeting of the beloved out of which the splendour of the lilies becomes visible.

First of all, attention should be paid to the subtle construction of this nocturnal meeting. There seems to be a kind of paradox here, or a kind of oxymoron. First there is the text *Dilectus meus mihi*, which goes on to tell about the beloved who pastures among the lilies and who sleeps at midday (*in meridie*). In other words, this text suggests the summit of light which is evidently the proper moment for the lovers to be united. Admittedly, an element of sleep is implied. It is at the very same moment, when the sun is at its highest, that the languidness of sleep is evoked. Whether Bernard's train of thought has in fact included this moment of midday sleep, we shall never know. It is clear, however, that after having first mentioned the possibility of bitter separation between the beloved and then the clouds which obscure the light of the midday sun, bringing about the passionate cry: 'Return, o Sunamite, return', we suddenly find ourselves in the middle of the night. *Luctare cum angelo*/fight with the angel. The fact that a complete quotation of this Genesis story should be postponed, stimulates the imagination. But when we are

reminded of this particular story, what else can we think of than the depth of darkness? In that sense there is a complete reversal: light turns into darkness. Once the eye has become adjusted to this new visual quality, a miraculous situation arises. The poetic scene of the *Dilectus meus* appears to be maintained throughout the narration of the story about Jacob's fight with the angel. The two sets of images are getting interwoven: the image of the struggle with the angel turns out to be enclosed in that of the embrace of the lovers. The daylight vision of sleep and peace no longer can be distinguished from the violent struggle in the darkness.

Of course, it is not difficult to find a tropological explanation of this passage. Bernard himself hints at it when he refers to the clouds obscuring the sunlight as the sin which stands between God and man. In the same way, love-life can be described in terms of fighting sin.

Your sins have not managed to overcome him; likewise it is to be wished that you will not be overcome by his punishment.

Having taken notice of the tropological meaning to be found in this passage, the reader will realize at the same time that this cannot be taken as a complete explanation of Bernard's text. Once again it is the priority of the monastic imagery which should be taken as the context. In this section that context consists of the scenery of the transformation of the text *Dilectus meus* into the nocturnal scene of the struggle between the man and the angel. A tropological, or any other explanation for that matter, cannot be intended to remove this setting. To do so would be the same as dragging an actor from the stage in order to judge his qualities in the unambiguous clarity of daylight. Put into the more general line of thought in this sermon, human language is determined and limited by shadows, names, memory. In other words, beyond those limits no objectified religious meaning can be found. Language and imagination have to content themselves with the realm of shadows as their sphere of action. As a consequence, the complexities of their imagery have to be both set and resolved within this space.

At this point it might be useful to refer again to the categories of courtly love. Without suggesting that the overlaying in this passage of love and violence can be explained by these categories, we might argue that courtly and monastic love share a common

suspense of delayed fulfilment. Instead of the static matrimonial terms (which Leclercq and Gilson use to describe it), that love lends itself to notions of temporariness and incompleteness, like the inaccessibility of the beloved (cf. the breaking up of the midday relation between the lovers), nocturnal secrecy and proofs of devotion. Fulfilment is the final goal; there is no point in denying that. But in the Christian and monastic context, the very presence and factual (as opposed to linguistic and pictural) priority of this fulfilment in the realm of shadows—like the presence of midday light in the darkness of Jacob's night—creates the world of images which constitutes human imagination and speech. Different expressions of desire and fulfilment are condensed, so to speak, into the manifestation of violent love. No more can be said about this scene in terms of love unless we pretend to be able to go beyond what, at the beginning of the sermon, Bernard has indicated to be the scope of the monastic mind.

Yet after this analysis of the complexities of the love-language spoken in the proximity of the Virgin Mary, some more specific remarks should be made about her virginity itself. Without going beyond the contours of imagination as we have defined them, it must be admitted that all the above-mentioned notions of love are qualified by a certain degree of virginity. What exactly do we mean by this, apart from the fact that, in order to be true, love in general should be qualified by a sentiment of innocent virginity?

As will be clear by now, Mary is the subject of the sermon. However, there is a rhetorical indirectness which makes her, according to the criteria of shadow and memory, into a semi-divine person not directly involved in the rapturous confrontation of the lovers. She belongs to that story of the Song of Songs where the question is raised as to the presence of the bridegroom at midday. Her place is 'among the lilies', i.e. in a certain terrestrial purity which connects us with the divine. This idea is in complete accordance with the doctrinal position of Mary as the link between the divine presence and the realm of shadows in which we live. However, her position in the sermon does more than mediate between light and darkness, reality and shadow. In spite of her indirect position 'among the lilies' she holds together the notions of desire and fulfilment, daylight turned into darkness, midday sleep

into violence. In other words, in spite of being a reflection of the real, divine world of light and splendour which is as incomprehensible as her virginity, she does not go beyond the realm of shadow and memory. She is *plena gratia*, full of grace and, as such, fulfilment. At the same time she represents the *infra desiderium*: there is more to be wished for. Being the only distinguishable, sharply contoured figure in an empty (monastic) space, she is in the position to catch the light from outside and reorganize it, reshape it in the endless stream of images. As such she is at the source of human imagination.

It is obvious that at this point in Bernard's use of language, rhetorics and doctrinal content coincide in the transparency of imagination. In the same way that Anselm, and for that matter Abelard, have explained the Christian language of images by means of rational thought and logic, Bernard has succeeded in elucidating images by means of images. Language and imagination originate in the shadowy state of ascetic silence. It is precisely within this context that Bernard's concept of spiritual love can be seen as an oblique form of fulfilment. This oblique form of fulfilment is not the same as *languor* hypostatized to which Gilson objected. It deserves rather to be called a new assessment of the whole process of love. By means of this Bernardine concept of language as the product of imagination, the sermon is autonomous and self-sufficient. Referring to human memory as its source and the Virgin Mary as its point of reference, it rotates around its own axis. In the end there is no external point which governs the relation between the images that arise from the depth of memory. Accordingly, the order of images is no longer preceded by any *tertium comparationis*.

Luctare cum angelo/fight with the angel. Or is that not a fight: my beloved is mine and I am his?

So much can be seen: two shadows involved in a nocturnal skirmish. Or are they two lovers embracing one another? What comes to the fore here is the ascetic use of pure lyrical language. The effect that the scene evokes is no less hallucinatory than the nocturnal vision at the window of the *Foebus abierat*.

CHAPTER FIVE

DEATH

A Passage to Paradise: Sermon 26 on the Song of Songs

1. The last of the Fathers

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Bernard was given the epitheton 'the last of the Fathers'.¹ Generally speaking this phrase has to be understood in an anti-scholastic sense. Mabillon, for instance, commenting on the phrase *ultimus inter patres* gives the following definition of 'Fathers':

Those are called Fathers by the Church whose sanctity, teaching and antiquity it holds in reverence. By 'teaching' I mean teaching of Scripture and tradition rather than philosophy...Those may be called Fathers who are made venerable thanks to the authority they already commanded and to their non-philosophical approach.²

It is this Bernard rather than Bernard the prelate and diplomat so cherished by Fénelon and Bossuet who enjoyed much popularity in some quarters of the French Counter-Reformation, especially in and around Port-Royal.³ Nicolas Fontaine, for instance, writes about Bernard as 'the last of the Fathers, with a mind of fire, a true Christian gentleman and a philosopher of grace'.⁴ This Bernard served as a model for Saint-Cyran's and Arnauld's search for Christian purity as it was to be found in the church of the Fathers. In an age which was in dangerous decline only to culminate in the sterility of Scholasticism Bernard had succeeded in symbolising and bringing to perfection those ancient ideals.

¹ The origin of the expression 'last of the Fathers' is discussed by O. Rousseau; Rousseau 1953: 306–8.

² Mabillon, Preface to the edition of Bernard's works, PL 182: 25–6.

³ For a general survey, see De Certeau 1963.

⁴ Fontaine 1736: 177.

I propose to use the notion 'last of the Fathers' in order to bring out another feature shared by Bernard and the Church Fathers: a certain degree of self-consciousness, often embedded in, or corresponding to, a sense of family pride. This notion of parental dignity, whether taken in a literal or a spiritual sense, is bound up with a more or less aristocratic attitude toward life. Examples of such an attitude can be found in the writings of Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose, and Augustine. In the case of Gregory and Ambrose, their sense of family dignity can partly be attributed to their social background. As to Augustine, things are different. Being of a more humble origin, he can be seen to fight his way towards self-consciousness through a powerful analysis of sin and failure. Gregory and Ambrose, on the other hand, depart from a superior social calm and appear less unbalanced by the destructive powers of sin. And if they are, they do not show it as much as Augustine, or they show it differently.

This phenomenon of self-consciousness gleaming through in religious writings should not primarily be explained in psychological terms. Rather it is the literary use the 'Fathers' make of their social background which is most intriguing. The few but important occasions on which those Fathers explicitly make their appearance in their own writings are marked by a dramatic setting of the narrative. In those cases they do not introduce themselves as the main characters in their autobiography but as *dramatis personae* in a theatre in which, in the absence of God, it is their very own selves which dominate the scene. They organise their narrative, reconstructing events from their own lives, and more in particular, that part of their lives which is made up of their witnessing the deaths of their loved ones. Ambrose, for one, sheds tears at the death of his brother Satyr.⁵ However, his dramatic behaviour goes beyond the traditional *planctus*. The combination of literary form—based on tradition—and episcopal duties almost produces a feeling of reconciliation and resignation which is more than mere consolation. Ambrose weeps as the brother he is without ceasing to be the lofty master of ceremonies. By fulfilling his official duties he is involved in promoting his brother, beyond the sadness of the bereaved, to greater glory. Gregory of Nyssa sheds tears over the death of his

⁵ Ambrose, *De excessu fratris sui Satyri libri duo*.

sister Macrina.⁶ Accidentally arriving at his sister's monastery—situated on the family estate—and finding her on the brink of death, he immediately takes charge, both as a brother and as a bishop. He ritualises his own behaviour without ignoring the personal aspects of the drama. Augustine sheds tears over the death of his mother Monnica.⁷ In the process, however, his tears merge with the tears of the Psalmist and are almost dried up by the incantational power of his own words.

What about Bernard? He too ritualises his own personal experience. As an abbot and priest taking the measure of his own grief over the death of his brother Gerard, he leans heavily on his patristic predecessors. And both his superior position in his own narrative and his superior style indeed earn him the title 'the last of the Fathers'. In a masterly reconstruction of the event he contrasts the forces of nature—death and strong emotions—with the role life—and death—is supposed to play from the Christian point of view. Just as Gregory of Nyssa's *Vita Macrinae* finds its contemplative parallel in the *Vita Moysis*, so Bernard's family sorrow bears the stamp of the monastic life he shared with his brother. Unlike Gregory, who comes in from the outside to visit his dying sister, Bernard has been on the spot all along. This narrowing down of the location to one strictly confined place, the *locus* and *terra* shared by both the deceased and the survivor, in my view greatly contributes to the specific qualities of Bernard's lament. That is why in this chapter the concept of *locus* is once more taken as a point of departure. Thence the argument moves to an analysis of Bernard's imagery of monastic death. In the end we will once more focus on the same *locus* of the monastery which contains the bodies of the deceased while being the theatre in which spiritual death is performed.

2. Narrative order and disorder

In the year 1138 Bernard's brother Gerard died. Two accounts of this events are extant: the famous *oraison funèbre* by Bernard

⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita S. Martinae*.

⁷ Augustine, *Confessiones*, book IX.

himself in Sermon 26 on the Song of Songs and the biographical portrait of Gerard in the *Exordium magnum cisterciense*, the latter being mostly a summary of the former. The main difference between the two versions is to be found in the order of the narration. Whereas in Sermon 26 the portrait of Gerard is interwoven in the lament of his brother Bernard, the *Exordium magnum* has two chapters dealing with the moral and religious qualities of the deceased before telling the actual story of his death. Further, the account of the event itself has to be regarded as a simplified version of the highly sophisticated text of Bernard.

Roughly speaking, the sequence of events in the *Exordium magnum* is as follows. In order to try to settle the schism of Peter Leo, Bernard once more sets out to travel to Italy accompanied by his brother Gerard. During their stay in Viterbo Gerard falls seriously ill and his end seems near. Bernard, unwilling to abandon his brother in a foreign country, implores the Lord to wait before taking Gerard away till they are safely back home in Clairvaux. Snatched away from before the gates of death Gerard recovers. The two brothers complete their business and return happily to their monastery 'carrying the sheaves of peace'. However, before long Gerard falls ill again after joyfully having resumed his former duties as the steward of the monastery and as a personal bodyguard of his brother, guaranteeing the latter's occasions of rest and meditation. There follows the death-scene, an almost verbal repetition of Sermon 26. In the middle of the night Gerard turns darkness into light and, singing psalms, he confutes the powers of death before commending his spirit to God the Father.

And repeating this phrase: 'Father, in thine hands I commend my spirit,' sighing heavily, he said: 'Father, Father', turning himself to the holy abbot, his brother, 'what a great good it is that God in his dignity is willing to be the Father of mankind.'

The chapter ends with a plain description of the funeral.

His brother, the holy abbot, paid him due respect and celebrated the funeral-mass devoutly and with tender affection. However, he did not weep with the others, with great command of faith forbidding his tears of passionate sorrow to flow

lest he seemed to lament the deceased and to cry because of him whose death he doubtlessly considered to be the transition to eternal life and everlasting glory. (*Exordium magnum*, Dist. III, c. 3)

Whatever purpose the *Exordium magnum* may have served—probably its main design was to familiarize a broad audience with the saintly qualities of Bernard and his companions—, there is no doubt that the story of Gerard's death is a watered down version of the original text in Sermon 26. The *Exordium magnum* thus presents the events in a chronological order. In Sermon 26 it is exactly the other way around. Bernard begins with a description of the funeral ceremony, breaks down into tears, hovers between the sweet memories of his brother and the brutal fact of his absence, describes the death-scene elaborately and concludes the sermon recalling an event from what seems to be a distant past: Viterbo. There, as it turns out, a deal (*pactum*) had been negotiated between God and Bernard concerning the man whose presence was claimed by the two parties involved. It is my contention that this reversal of the chronological order in Sermon 26 is essential for understanding the structure of Bernard's discourse. In situating his lament between two locations (*loci*), the dark earth (*terra*) of the monastic cemetery on the one hand, and the brightness—however remote—of the Italian light in Viterbo on the other, Bernard creates space for an analysis of images which, rising up from the depth of memory, touch upon things human and divine. In the light of this approach Bernard's inability to shed tears at the funeral of his brother cannot be explained away by the hagiographical assumption of Gerard's heavenly state. Rather it has to be viewed as a rhetorical device allowing Bernard to introduce himself—quite unlike the *Exordium magnum* which, though following Bernard's text to the letter, tells the story in the third person—as the observer of his own grief.

3. Rhetorical order and disorder

The fact that Bernard is the author of Sermon 26 as well as its principal subject seems to provide this text with a basic literary unity. The abbot, standing at his brother's grave, finally giving way to his emotions in the company of his fellow-monks and shedding

abundant tears, can be seen as an example of monastic mourning and as such he might be said to perform—and even remain within—his own sermon. As Peter von Moos has pointed out, even the link with the wider context of the Sermons on the Song of Songs is not lacking. The text under consideration happened to be *Sicut tabernacula Cedar, sicut pelles Salomonis* (Cant. 1,4) which represents in Bernard's view the fragility and temporariness of our earthly abode. 'What do "tabernacles" mean but our bodies in which we make our pilgrimage?'

Problems do arise, however, when the possibility of discrepancies between the actual moment of sorrow and its literary reflection is taken into account. Of course, there is nothing special about that as such, since it is the very nature of a literary text not to coincide with its content. In suggesting his text to be the immediate rendering of orally delivered sermons, however, Bernard adds to the complexity of the relationship between the text on the one hand and the event described on the other. And even though, thanks to the work of Jean Leclercq on this matter, it has now been widely accepted that the coming into being of Bernard's sermons has passed through different stages: the oral deliverance, the notes of the secretaries and the final redaction⁸—in this case it is extremely hard to see through those elements of fiction, to forget the sound of the *viva vox* and to distinguish the 'authentic' and 'spontaneous' emotional outbreak from the subtle artificialities of its rhetorical rendering. In his *Consolatio*⁹ Peter von Moos has raised the question as to the possibility of tracing the influence of the *viva vox*.

Aüssert sich die Spontaneität in dem mehr assoziativen als streng logischen Aufbau der Themen? Wie weit erscheint andreseits in dem oft subtilen Gedankengang, im Gewebe der Reminiscenzen oder in der kunstvollen Verteilung der Klangfarben eine nachträglich eingearbeitete Gestalt, die allerdings nur das Werk eines kongenialen Meisters sein kann? Die Fragen können weniger beantwortet als durch eine Untersuchung der Motiv-Reihen und Dispositionsgelenke differenzierter gestellt werden. Wie verschiedene feinsinnige Stilanalysen Leclercqs gezeigt haben, liegt die eigne Schönheit der

⁸ Leclercq 1962: 191–245.

⁹ Von Moos 1971, 1972.

Prosa Bernhards in Beherrschung starker Gefühle durch die Kunst. "Il en résulte un surprenant alliage d'intensité et d'artifice, une extraordinaire combinaison de la sincérité avec les procédés". Wir dürfen also nicht von der Voraussetzung ausgehen, daß die schriftliche Ausarbeitung notwendig eine "Erstarrung" des mündlichen Vortrags bedeute, sondern haben das Zusammenspiel des Emotionellen und Rhetorischen im abgeschlossenen Werk zu beschreiben.¹⁰

'Assoziative-logisch', 'Gefühle-Kunst', 'intensité-artifice-sincérité', 'rhetorisch-emotionell'. One can but share Von Moos' view that all these opposite pairs are enclosed within one and the same literary work, the only access to its underlying, 'spontaneous' emotions consisting of a further differentiation of its 'Motiv-Reihen' and 'Dispositionsgelenken'. It is no mean achievement on Bernard's part to have successfully shaped in Sermon 26 the most emotional, most disturbing of human experiences: death, into the orderly discourse of a *consolatio*. Within that framework justice is being done at the same time to the disorderly nature of death. Although its unbalancing, if not destructive, influence seemingly manifests itself in a state of mind the literary reflection of which does not leave room for the application of the *ars praedicatoria*—'Une foule de sentiments se succèdent pêle-mêle, comme les premiers mouvements de l'âme dans le désordre de la douleur'—it is precisely this disorder which has to be interpreted as a 'kunstgerechte Verwirrung

¹⁰ 'Does the spontaneity emerge in the different themes being organised according to an associative rather than a strictly logical pattern? On the other hand, how remote does the possibility seem of things being refashioned a posteriori—that too could only be the work of a congenial master—if one looks at the often subtle trains of thought, the web of reminiscences or the artful division of sound colours. Rather than trying to give a straight answer to those questions we should try to refine them by analyzing the chains of motives and the points on which the disposition of the text hinges. As Jean Leclercq has shown in a number of subtle analyses of Bernard's style, the beauty of his prose lies in the control of strong emotions by art. "As a result we have a surprising blend of intensity and artificiality, an extraordinary combination of sincerity and formal procedures." Consequently, there is no reason to assume that the writing down of the text necessarily implies a fossilization of oral delivery. Rather we should describe the ensemble of emotional and rhetorical aspects as they function within the bounds of the enclosed work [of art].' Von Moos 1971: 279–80 (C733).

der Dispositio', a rhetorical device to incorporate mental disturbance into the linguistic structure of mourning. The question remains, however, whether this refinement of 'Motiv-Reihen' and 'Dispositions-gelenken' can account for the complete dramatic range of associations, feelings, sincerity and emotions as opposed to, or as part of, logic, art, artificiality and rhetoric. A danger looms on the horizon here, admittedly more so in Leclercq's phrasing of the problem than in Von Moos', that emotion and sincerity are being transposed to an area which, not unlike Kant's region of the *Gewühl der Empfindungen*, is as yet untouched by the categories of literary time and place. Leclercq's sincerity, for instance, might imply such a view in which piety and emotion are thought to originate in a realm of existence beyond the boundaries of the *ordre du discours*. Of course, no text is an island entirely to itself, but neither are emotions, feelings and associations, nor indeed death.

To get a better grip of the associative and emotional aspects of the text, I intend first to follow Von Moos' rhetorical reconstruction of Sermon 26. In trying to go beyond Von Moos' analysis, I will take my point of departure at the very point where he admits his description of the rhetorical structure of the sermon to be inadequate in that it does not completely cover what is going on. The occurrence of what von Moos calls a *Milderung der Struktur-grenze* raises the question as to the nature of discontinuity, however slight, in the rhetorical order.¹¹

Having given an extremely detailed and almost exhaustive exposition, Von Moos cautiously moves on to offer a scheme which contains different rhetorical divisions and subdivisions: *exordium*, *propositio*, *confirmatio*, *transitio*, *confutatio*, *conclusio*.¹²

In terms derived from this rhetorical division the story of the sermon would seem to run as follows. After an abortive attempt to comment on the text *SICUT TABERNACULA CEDAR, SICUT PELLIS SALOMONIS* Bernard publicly confesses his inability to suppress his grief any longer:

¹¹ Von Moos 1971: 289 (C759), 323 (C832).

¹² Von Moos 1971: 324–7 (C833).

I admit, I have been defeated. It is necessary now that my inner suffering come to the fore. (SC 26 II 3)

So much for the *exordium a persona auctoris*, soon to be followed by the *exordium a persona auditoris* in the form of an appeal by Bernard to his fellow-monks to share in his grief. This should not be difficult since Gerard's social position in the monastery and his special relationship with his brother was known to all. In its presentation of the *causa doloris*, the *propositio* takes its starting-point in this well-established fact, thus providing Bernard with the opportunity to consider himself as the real victim by contrasting notions of absence and presence.

Most bitter separation, which only death could bring about! For at which moment of your life would you have been prepared to abandon me behind alive? It has all been wrought by death, this horrible separation. For who but death, hostile to all this sweetness, would not have saved such a sweet bond as was our mutual love? Well done, death, which in seizing one man, furiously managed to destroy two! Or does death not apply to me? It does so, even to a greater extent since for me a life is being reserved which is more unfortunate than any form of death. I live with the sole purpose of dying alive. Am I supposed to call that life?...Cruel state of affairs. It is my fate, however, which is to be pitied, not his! (SC 26 II 4)

The second part of the presentation of the *causa doloris* consists of the *confirmatio*. Once more the cruel tension between Gerard's absence and Bernard's presence is highlighted. The former, having entered the abyss of light and being absorbed in the sea of eternal bliss, almost seems to be cut off from earthly memories so as to forget about the latter's fate. It is only God's, and, living as he does now in the divine presence, Gerard's love, which prevents this from happening. What follows is a description of the earthly counterpart of Gerard's heavenly state; Bernard being badly in need of the help and support which he used to receive from his brother. Bitter feelings on Bernard's part are subtly interspersed with a laudatory portrait of the humble brother, who, being all things to all men, considered it to be his main task to busy himself with running the

monastery on behalf of the abbot. Not that he himself did not long for the contemplative life. As Gerard confessed on his deathbed, it was only care for his brother which stood in the way of that rest:

‘Lord,’ he said, ‘you know how much according to my abilities I have always wished to seek rest for myself and to be free before you. But I have been kept bound by fear of you and the wish of the brothers and by the zeal to obey and, above all, by the fraternal love for him who is both my abbot and my brother.’ (SC 26 IV 6)

The literary ingenuity of this passage is quite remarkable. Gerard, being the object of Bernard’s lament, is introduced here through the rhetorical device of prosopopoeia, speaking about his brother, the abbot, referring to the latter’s authority which eventually shaped his life. Thus, simultaneously portraying his brother and having the latter portray himself as the final object of fraternal love:

super omnia abbatis pariter et fratris germana dilectio,

Bernard secretly creeps into the character he describes. It should be noted, by the way, how subtly this self-portrait is built into the general theme of absence and presence. In a kind of prolepsis Bernard puts forward a scene which in the *ordo narrationis* is yet to take place: Gerard’s deathbed. However, within the order of the sermon itself, it is Gerard’s absence which, as the cause of the rhetorical outburst into tears, is prior to anything else. As a result, the coincidence of the last moments of fraternal intimacy which are officially still to come, with the attempt to bring sweet memories back to life into a description of Gerard’s activities, enables the author to evoke his own fragile person as being on the brink of death. Remembering Gerard’s omnipresence and omnipotence as far as practical monastic skills are concerned—in terms of Benedict’s Rule: his presence in the buildings, in the fields, in the gardens etc., and his dealings with bricklayers, carpenters, farmers, gardeners, shoemakers and weavers—, not only makes Bernard realise the privilege of his own contemplative rest as well as his utter dependence on his brother both of which resulted from all this. It also causes him to question the very status of his own lofty identity.

I was justly utterly dependant on him who was everything to me. All he left me was the honour and name of provider, for

it was he who did the work. I was called abbot, but it was he who was preeminent in solicitude. It is for good reason that my spirit rested in him through whom I had the opportunity to rejoice in God, to have more time for preaching, and more room for praying. Thanks to you, I say, my brother, I had a more sober mind and more gracious rest, a more effective speech, a smoother prayer, a more frequent opportunity for reading and a more ardent affection. (SC 26 V 7)

Whatever identity is left inevitably breaks down once its very basis has been taken away. No wonder that once more Bernard bitterly complains about his fate, incapable of seeing any sense in protracting his own life.

As far as I shall live, I shall live in bitterness, I shall live in mourning; and I shall be consoled by the affliction which will be the result of my mourning. I shall have no mercy and I shall help the hand of the Lord; for 'the hand of the Lord has touched me' (Job 19,21). It is me, I say, whom He has touched and struck, not him whom He has called to rest. It is me whom He has killed when He cut him off. For who will call a person defunct whom He has planted in the middle of life? What has been the gate to life for him is clearly death to me. It is about myself that I shall say that I am dead in that death, not about him who sleeps in the Lord. (SC V 8)

This is the end of the *propositio*. Rhetorically speaking, Bernard has reached the nadir of grief in this final display of bitterness, giving way to another, more vehement outburst into tears: *exite, exite, lacrimae*. What follows is called by Von Moos: *confutatio*, the justification of the *causa doloris* in particular. From here till the end of the sermon Bernard tries to find his way back by establishing a kind of balance between excessive grief and the *moderatio* which is supposed to be the hallmark of monastic life. And even if it turns out that occasional fits of grief cannot be suppressed, it is in the context of the process of 'normalisation' that they are to be viewed. As such, for instance, there is nothing abnormal in lamenting the dead, although it is of little use from a monastic point of view.

For we see the dead daily mourn their dead: many tears, little profit. (SC VI 8)

However, a legitimate form of human vulnerability does exist. It is to be found in the breaking down of the 'hardness of stone' (*fortitudo lapidum*), of the heart of stone, thus revealing an area in which denying human affection makes no sense.

I confess to having affection, and I do not deny it. Who will call that carnal? I do not deny being human just as I do not deny being man. If that is not enough, I shall not deny to be carnal. For I am also carnal, sold under sin, addicted to death; subject to punishment and evil. I admit, I am not insensitive to punishment: I do fear my own death and the death of my loved ones. Gerard was mine, mine clearly. Or was he not mine who was my brother by blood, my son by profession, my father in care, my fellow in spirit, my intimate friend by affection? It is he who has gone from me: I feel it, I am wounded, and gravely so. (SC 26 VI 9)

Having once more stated that his grief is no sin but, more realistically, a human sense of punishment, Bernard turns to the description of the death-scene. Here too the right cause for grief is both defended and mitigated through the evocation of the nocturnal setting against the backdrop of which Gerard is seen to insult and to combat death and, by dying the way he does, to achieve victory. And if, after this glorious event, Bernard is called back to the reality of sorrow, it is only to defend his self-pity—which has abandoned the realm of personal exclusivity by now—as being part of a long scriptural tradition of justified tears: David for Saul and Jonathan, David for Absalon, Jesus for Jerusalem, and Jesus at the grave of Lazarus.

The *causa doloris* having thus been firmly rooted in the biblical tradition as well as in human nature, the *conclusio* of the lament sounds more relaxed. In one way or another Bernard seems to have come to terms with the cruel God of Job whose 'hand had touched him'. Once more referring to Job he admits:

You have given Gerard, you have taken him away. And if we mourn his passing away, yet we do not forget your gift and we thank you for having deserved to have him. And we are willing not to miss him as far as it is not becoming for us to do so. (SC 26 VIII 13)

In the final episode of the sermon this Job-like feeling of resignation with regard to the dealings of God and man is exemplified, personified so to speak—as Von Moos points out—in Bernard's suddenly remembering the *Abmachung* (*pactum*) of Viterbo which we have already come across in the *Exordium magnum*. As it turns out, the sermon is not only about the author's grief observed. He also appears to be the main actor in the drama which is the *causa secretior* of his brother's death as well as of his own tears. In view of the further analysis of the sermon the passage is quoted here in its entirety:

Lord, I remembered my deal and your mercy in order that you may be found more just in your words and will win when you are being judged. Last year when we were staying in Viterbo because of Church business, he fell ill, and, while he pined away and his 'calling' seemed imminent, I could not bear the thought of leaving behind my travel companion—and more specifically that companion—in a foreign country and being unable to restore him to those who had put him under my care, because he was loved by all as he was most lovable. Then I turned to prayer, weeping and sighing: 'Lord, wait,' I said, 'till our return. When he will have been restored to his friends, take him back again, if you like and I shall not quarrel.' You have answered my prayer, o God. He recovered, we completed our business you had charged us with and we returned 'exultantly, carrying our sheaves of peace'. I had almost forgotten about the agreement with me, but you had not. I am ashamed of the sobbing of those who accuse me of having been in the wrong. What more is there to be said? You have reclaimed what had been commended to you, you have received what was yours. Tears mark the limit of words. May it please you, o Lord, to mark the limit and measure of tears. (SC VIII 14)

As far as the deliberative question is concerned: *utrum dolendum annon?*¹³ the rhetorical structure of the sermon provides a clear answer. In that respect *exordium*, *propositio*, *confirmatio* and *confutatio* have done their job proving the legitimacy and effectiveness of mourning as an effort to master grief. But what about

¹³ Von Moos 1971: 322 (C829).

the more associative aspects mentioned earlier? Admittedly, Von Moos' formal reconstruction largely succeeds in keeping those spontaneous and associative elements within the bounds of the *abgeschlossenes Werk*, and in his analysis he certainly does not miss a detail either formally or materially. Further, his explanation of the rhetorical 'disorder' sounds most convincing:

Die formale *Dispositio* ist in der Hauptsache durch die dialektische Struktur des Schemas bestimmt. Das anscheinend verwirrende Bild sich wiederholender und überschneidender Motive entspricht der assoziativen Verknüpfung mehrerer, die Antithese von Trauer und Freude zunehmend entspannender Betrachtungen.¹⁴

In other words, dominating the formal structure of the sermon there is the extremely powerful leitmotif of the dynamic alternation of mourning and *consolatio* resulting in a *kunstgerechte Verwirrung der 'Dispositio'* and a *Milderung der Strukturgrenze*.¹⁵ And, indeed, that is what can and should be said from a rhetorical point of view. What remains is the question as to the further nature and form of those 'Verwirrungen' which touch upon the realm of emotions. In this context it becomes a matter of urgency to resume the question of the relationship between rhetorical and literary form on the one hand, and the expression of associative emotions on the other. However evident it may at first seem that in Sermon 26 emotions are being expressed through the vehicle of the artfully structured lament, at the same time they seem to elude the grasp of the interpreter unless the latter turns himself into a psychologist. Is it then at all possible for associations, reminiscences and feelings to be an integral part of the rhetorical and literary discourse and, what is more, to be recognisable as such? Or do they, eventually, shielded from conceptual order and disorder within their innocent state of spontaneousness and sincerity, have to stay outside the text?

¹⁴ 'The formal *dispositio* is mainly determined by the dialectic structure of the scheme. The seemingly confusing image of a repetition and overlap of motives corresponds to an associative entanglement of various ideas which relax the tension caused by the antithesis between mourning and joy.' Von Moos 1971: 323 (C831).

¹⁵ Von Moos 1971: 323 (C822).

Incongruities in Bernard's rhetorical handling of his brother's death did not go unnoticed at the time. In a famous, highly satirical attack, a certain Berengar,¹⁶ a pupil of Abelard, took Bernard to task, pointing out that the latter had sinned not only against the tradition of the Church Fathers but also against the rules of composition in classical Latin. According to Berengar conflation of two different genres, in this case the bridal poetry of the Song of Songs and the tragic form of the lament, runs against literary conventions and is, therefore, totally unacceptable.

After having commented on a part of the Song of Songs, he abruptly introduces the death of his brother, the description of whose funeral takes almost eight pages. I shall briefly sum up the incongruities and nonsense he is talking there. That book by Solomon was composed in the workshop of the Holy Spirit and describes the marital embraces of Christ and the Church who are represented by the bride and groom. Joy is in harmony with the wedding feast. Bernard, however, either overcome by weariness because of the obscurity of the subject-matter or ignoring the words of the Apostle who suggests that he 'rejoice with the joyful', brings his dead man to the wedding party, although it is written: 'God is not a God of the dead but of the living.' The bridegroom is lying at the bosom of the bride and the friends of the bride and groom are having their pleasure with one another when all of a sudden the sound of the trumpet announces a funeral. The dinner party is turned into a gathering of mourners, the musical company into a funeral procession...' (*Apologeticus*; PL 178: 1863D–1864A)

Horace's *Ars poetica* is quoted in support of the view that an author is free to commence where and how he likes, but not to end where and how he likes. Ignoring this rule leads to conflicting images:

If a painter chose to join a human head to the neck of a horse, and to spread feathers of many a hue over limbs picked up now here now there, so that what at the top is a lovely woman ends below in a black and ugly fish, could you, my friends, if favoured with a private view, refrain from laughter?... 'Painters and poets,' you say, 'have always had an equal right in

¹⁶ On Berengar, see Luscombe 1969: 29–48 and Evans 1983: 167–71.

hazarding anything.' We know it: this licence we poets claim and in our turn we grant the like; but not so far that the savage should mate with the tame, or serpents couple with birds, lambs with tigers.¹⁷

'We are used to laugh at pictures which at first show a man and in the end a donkey,' so Berengar applies Horace's view to Bernard's confusion of joy and tragedy, thus subtly reminding the latter of his own fierce attack on monastic-pictorial disorder in the cloister of Cluny.¹⁸ Whatever special literary privileges might be claimed for the monastic author, it is neither ignorance nor rejection of Horace's rules that can be appealed to by someone who once upon a time had bitterly complained about the pictures in the cloister of

many bodies under one head, many heads in one body, the tail of a serpent in a four-footed animal, the head of a four-footed animal in a fish, animals divided into a horse at the front and the goat at the rear. (Apo XII 29; Rudolph 1990a: 283)

An appalling state of affairs which, in the eyes of Bernard, far from being an expression of innocent, decorative playfulness, had caused turmoil and distraction in what was supposed to be the contemplative heart of the monastery.

Berengar's second objection to Bernard's style is much in line with his first. It is the latter's utter lack of moderation, his rhetorical exuberance which flatly contradicts the seriousness of the subject-matter.

In this lament Bernard is so vehement, so unyielding, so lively that the reader, whoever he is, is under the permanent impression that he does not shed real tears but rather pours out words which are the expression of true laments. For, seduced by his command of language some of those stupid people who like the body of words but despise the soul of reason, maintain that he uses such sublime fluency in those laments as to make him the unequalled champion of modern eloquence. (*Apologeticus*; PL 178: 1865C)

¹⁷ Horace, *Ars poetica*; Rushton Fairclough: 450–1.

¹⁸ See Chapter One.

Apart from the fact that such eloquence tends to be repetitious and void of meaning, it is hardly efficient.

The deceased is neither resurrected by such (rhetorical) means nor do the illusions of eloquence take the place of real life.

Finally, Berengar, in an attempt to counter Bernard's accusation of Abelard as having gone beyond the wisdom of the Fathers, refers his opponent back to the illustrious Ambrose who, in his *Liber de excessu fratris sui Satyri*, had given such a fine example of the subdued style so appropriate for the occasion.

Obviously, Berengar's criticism was part of a game being played by set rules. The two contestants are clearly to be seen as men of letters who, thanks to their common education, know how to tease one another. It is not so easy to determine when and where someone belonging to such a culture is breaking away from the literary complex, especially since rhetorical non-conformity is often to be considered nothing but a deliberate twist in the rhetorical setting aimed at displaying mastery of the rules rather than indicating disloyalty. As far as Bernard is concerned, we have seen that he knows his Horace as well as Berengar. When it suited him, he too turned out to be quite capable of accusing others of 'bad taste'.

The same caveat applies to Berengar's second accusation: Bernard's utter lack of moderation, his shedding rhetorical rather than real tears. But then it should be noted that the very same theme, based on a long patristic tradition, figures prominently in the sermon Berengar is talking about. It is, as Bernard admits, the impossibility of controlling himself any longer, his yielding to the violence of grief which draws the stream of tears out of him. Moderation, that is precisely what he is asking for:

My tears indicate the end of words. Lord, may it please you to indicate the end and measure of tears.

Moreover, the inability to control his own verbosity which results from his attempts to frame strong 'personal' or 'religious' feelings, is a running theme in Bernard's work. In the early treatise *De gradibus humilitatis et superbiae* he complains, as we have seen, about trailing behind his own loquacity, having become the victim of his own fluency. The very same skills which had enabled him to carry his audience up to the sweetness of divine presence, have

cruelly abandoned him as an orphan of his own rhetorical creativity. 'O, that I had the wings of a dove...'

Obviously, on a rhetorical level this lack of moderation was intended to contribute to a heightened sense of control. However, control in the monastic setting means speaking up in order to establish the presence of life. However self-imposed such speaking up may be, once having embarked on it, one is bound to go on to the very end, exorcising the stone-like presence of death from the realm of the monastic self. In doing just that, Bernard should not be judged more serious than Berengar. On the contrary. Greater literary skills and more frivolous self-pity and self-mockery are needed to hold together monastic life and death than Berengar may have realised. In that respect, as in so many others, Bernard might be said to be closer to the latter's master, Abelard. For, waging the *experimentum* of mixing the love genre with the lament, is not altogether unlike Abelard's attempt to be a cleric, to teach dialectics and to sing love songs all at the same time. The avowed failure of that attempt only adds to the similarities, reminding one as it does of the failure on Bernard's part to keep pace with his own brilliant rhetorical performance, or, for that matter, his failure to control his emotions. Moreover, both Abelard and Bernard present their modern readers with the problem of what should be made of their *experimentum*, their claim of authenticity, the open-endedness of their love and grief. From that question springs the next one. What do we make of their 'autobiographical' confession following those strong feelings not to be in control of them? Is it the story of their lives? Or do they rather want to tell us about the performance of the story of their lives? Further, to what extent is their failure to stay in control supposed to be part of their performance and does the *experimentum* flow back into the stream of the fixed life-pattern from which it had, momentarily, deviated?

4. Monastic order and disorder

It is only in the next sermon (Sermon 27), the morning after the night before, that Bernard sobers up a bit and takes the measure of his sorrow.

Now that we have paid tribute to our friend on his way to the homeland with the offices which we as humans owe him, I return, brethren, to the interrupted sequence of edifying sermons. For it is not becoming to go on bewailing someone who himself is happy, and to shed a lot of tears for someone who himself is sitting at a banquet. But also if we feel sorry for our own misery, we ought not to overdo it lest we seem not so much to have loved him as having been after the good we might derive from him. May, indeed, the joy of the beloved temper the sadness of the bereaved, and may his absence be more acceptable for us thanks to his being with God. (SC 27 I 1)

There is clearly no point in unnecessarily prolonging one's grief. Structured by the daily routine of preaching on the Song of Songs and in accordance with a long rhetorical tradition, the death of the beloved brother is reduced to the incident that was yesterday. Now it is back to business, back to the *longue durée* of monastic time, to the *tabernacula Cedar* and the *pelles Salomonis*.

However, Berengar's question still stands, as it stands. Why bring a dead man to a wedding-party? Has Bernard really sinned against the rhetorical rules or does the wedding-song intrinsically imply the darker shades of death? If so, how does one account for this from a rhetorical point of view? As if anticipating Berengar's attack Bernard's reply can be found in his own summary of the situation at the beginning of Sermon 27. Berengar is right after all. There is, indeed, a feast going on in heaven where Gerardus is celebrating his promotion happily sitting at a banquet. Watching this scene those who have been left behind should not envy 'the joy of their beloved'/*gaudium dilecti*, however cruel the separation may be.

Thus Bernard adroitly hints at the almost invisible connecting lines between the work in progress on love on the one hand, and the sudden outburst of grief on the other. Before reassessing the scope and meaning of the 'autobiographical' statement made in Sermon 26 we have to know more about the nature of death—and, consequently, about the presence and absence of love and the loved ones—within the monastery. Only then will it be possible to begin to realise the newness and uniqueness of Bernard's *experimentum* in Sermon 26.

Before turning to monastic death and love proper, some general remarks should be made with regard to the place of language and emotions in the monastery. For this purpose let us briefly recall the emotions and associations in Sermon 26. Their rhetorical form seemed to make direct access to them impossible. Now there is yet another barrier which prevents grief and affections from moving around freely and sincerely. It is the monastic status which forces, as it were, human condition into the framework of a more or less artificial existence. So, in addition to the literary/rhetorical context the monastic experience is even further narrowed down to the fulfilment of its official duties. Concepts and words which have an unambiguous meaning in the world, are slightly twisted so as to become functional in the ritual context of the monastery. Brother/*frater*, for instance, does not signify in the first place 'brother' in the literal sense of the word, but 'brother in Christ', member of the monastic community. Of course, there is nothing new in that as such. Such a process of extended meaning applied to a great number of linguistic expressions has always been part of the Christian tradition. In the monastery, however, this general religious language becomes intensified. An extra twist is given to words and expressions which had been twisted already against their initial meaning through a process which in some ways is reminiscent of the way semantic innovations came about in the early-Christian era. The monk is not only to be called *frater* but he has effectively renounced his father, mother, brother and sister. In a more literal way than the general believer, he no longer lives 'in the flesh'. In fact, memories of his former life are out of the question. If he is happy, he experiences the Benedictine *hilaritas*. If he mourns, he fulfils his official, monastic duty: the *officium flendi*, and if he dies, he gains access to eternal bliss. From this point of view Bernard's lament about his deceased brother begins to look extremely ambivalent and oblique. As a matter of fact, to lament as he did was not at all permissible within the walls of the monastery. In that respect Berengar did have a point. Interruption of the monastic wedding-song is out of order and ought not to be tolerated. On the other hand, it may be rightly doubted whether the process of forgetting supposedly taking place in the monastery, can really be taken literally and lived to the full. Is it possible for human language to lose its initial meaning altogether, to forget its origin, if any, in

favour of a higher and ultimate signification? In religious terms, this amounts to the following question: is it possible for the monk to live up to his claim of living the perfect angelic life?

However this may be, viewed from the outside world, words relating to human experience take on an external meaning on entering the monastery: love comes to signify spiritual love between God and man, death comes to signify the transition to eternal life, tears become the vehicles to bring the penitent monk closer to the Lord. Inside the monastery, however, things look slightly different. There, in the artificial space of the monastery, it is the effective functioning of language within the enclosed community that comes first. The extra-mural world is supposed to have lost, or, more realistically, to lose, influence and power in a permanent process of transformation. It is precisely this process which deserves closer attention. For, from whatever point of view one approaches the matter, a *trompe l'oeil* effect is inevitably part of the game. In spite of the illusion of the hermetic space so brilliantly created, even the highest degree of transformation will not be able to conceal the extra-mural origin of death, love, tears and joy.

So, the monk Bernard who has cut off all ties with the world of the past creates total oblivion through a technique of recycling old material. Not only has he completely forgotten about the former meaning his words may have had. He also, paradoxically, restores old language to its original meaning. Brother Bernard bewails brother Gerard: two monks belonging to the same spiritual family. At the same time—as so often—Bernard steps out of his monastic picture, as the real brother he is bewailing his real brother Gerard as if thereby renewing old bonds. Doing that, he is, in fact, trespassing. From that illicit *commixtio* of old ties and present monastic relationships arises a new assessment of the *condition humaine*, expressed in a new, transformed language. In between those different stages, which, of course, are no real stages at all, something unheard of, something impossible must be happening. All we can do at present is to call this unnamed phenomenon whose technicalities have not yet been grasped: *experimentum*.

To disentangle the knot of extra- and intra-mural language let us now concentrate on monastic death proper. What role is death supposed to play inside the monastery?

In Sermon 52 on the Song of Songs Bernard attempts to describe the feelings of the bride sleeping the sleep of ecstatic death in the arms of the bridegroom. The point the sermon wants to make is that, according to the Cantic-text under consideration, the bride should not be disturbed in this happy slumber:

I charge you, daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles and the hinds of the field, not to stir my beloved or rouse her until she pleases. (Cant. 2,7)

Obviously, mystery is at hand here. In one way or another, experience—Bernard does not say whose experience—must precede the production of so beautiful a text. The exceptional nature of this situation is further strengthened when Bernard puts it into celestial perspective. It is the foretaste of that which is to come.

That in heaven it is like this, as I read on earth, I do not doubt, nor that the soul will come to experience with certainty what is described in that sacred page, except that here she cannot express her experience as she will there be capable of grasping, but cannot yet grasp. What do you think she will receive there when now she is favoured with an intimacy so great as to feel herself embraced by the arms of God, cherished on the breast of God, guarded by the care and zeal of God lest she be roused from her sleep by anyone till she wakes up of her own accord. (SC 52 I 2; transl. Walsh 1979: 51)

Sic, sic in caelo esse non ambigo, ut lego in terra. Underlying the suggestion of modesty in this passage ('cannot yet grasp') is a rather bold assumption. It is, after all, no mean achievement for a literary text (*lego in terra*) such as the Cantic to have produced in the monastic mind, in however preliminary a fashion, a sweet slumber beyond the awakenings of everyday life. Not surprisingly, it turns out to be difficult, if not impossible, to find the categories by which this sleep is to be explained. And even the conventional biblical connotation of sleep such as the sleep (of death) of Lazarus or the sleep of sin, has to be declared null and void in this matter. It is only in paradoxical terms that the true meaning of this sleep can be hinted at.

For it is a genuine sleep that yet does not stupefy the mind but transports it. And—I say it without hesitation—it is a death, for

the apostle Paul in praising people still living in the flesh spoke thus: 'For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.' (SC 52 II 3: transl. Walsh 1979: 52)

This state of bliss is indeed to be called ecstatic since in it the soul is carried beyond the narrow bonds of normal life into a peculiar lightness of being.

'O that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest.' (Ps. 54,7)

Fly away, into what? Obviously into a state of pure contemplation, but in view of its ecstatic nature one might inquire into the recognisability of its structure. Or is the power of death in the quotation from St. Paul 'For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God' such as even to destroy the subtle paradox of the secret evocation of life out of its very denial? As long as there is life, on the other hand, it seems hard to put it in terms of activity, thus threatening its special mortal status. As far as Bernard is concerned, he clearly uses the poetry of the *Canticle* in phrasing this ecstatic state of mind whose 'sharpness of vision and swiftness of motion' is compared with the gazelles and hinds in the field. More realistically, in religious terms at least, it is the life of the angels which is hinted at in this context.

It is not absurd for me to call the bride's ecstasy a death, then, but one that snatches away not life but life's snares, so that one can say: 'We have escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowlers' (Ps. 123,7). In this life we move about surrounded by traps, but these cause no fear when the soul is drawn out of itself by a thought that is both powerful and holy, provided that it transcends the normal manner and habit of thinking; for a net is spread in vain before the eyes of the winged creatures. Why dread wantonness where there is no awareness of life? For since the ecstatic soul is cut off from awareness of life though not from life itself, it must of necessity be cut off from the temptations of life. 'O that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest' (Ps. 54,7). How I long often to be the victim of this death that I may escape the snares of death, that I may not feel the deadening blandishments of a sensual life, that I may be steeled against evil desire, against the surge of cupidity, against the goads of anger and im-

patience, against the anguish of worry and the miseries of care. Let me die the death of the just, that no injustice may ensnare or wickedness seduce me. How good the death that does not take away life but makes it better; good in that the body does not perish but the soul is exalted.

Men alone experience this. But, if I may say so, let me die the death of angels, that, transcending the memory of things present, I may cast off not only the desire for what is corporeal and inferior but even their images that I may enjoy pure conversation with those who bear the likeness and purity. This kind of ecstasy, in my opinion, is alone or principally called contemplation. Not to be gripped during life by material desires is a mark of human virtue; but to gaze without the use of bodily likeness is the sign of angelic purity/*Verum hoc hominum est. Sed moriatur anima mea morte etiam, si dici potest, angelorum, ut praesentium memoria excedens, rerum se inferiorum corporearumque non modo cupiditatibus, sed et similitudinibus exuat, sitque ei pura cum illis conversatio, in quibus est puritatis similitudo. Talis, ut opinor, excessus, aut tantum, aut maxime, contemplatio dicitur. Rerum etenim cupiditatibus vivendo non teneri, humanae virtutis est; corporum vero similitudinis speculando non involvi, angelicae puritatis est.* (SC 52 II 4–5; transl. Walsh 1979: 52–3)

In my view it makes little sense to concentrate exclusively on this ecstatic and angelic state of mind, thus severing this angelic death from the life—or, for that matter, death—preceding it. Not only would a life made up of ecstatic highlights be impossible, even within the walls of the monastery, but the very same highlights owe their origin to material existence in the same way as a metaphor includes the object it is compared to and the spiritual embraces the literal. Now a familiar way to express this connection between different mystical stages and their culmination into an *excessus mentis* is to use the model of an itinerary, a schematic survey of steps which are in themselves unambiguously clear. Such an itinerary comprises both the shady world the mind in search of contemplation starts from, and the stages of increasing clarity leading up to a state at which a fundamental gap is being produced between those preceding stages and their final transformation into things as yet unheard of.

As far as Bernard is concerned, however—at least in and around Sermon 52—we witness him following a completely different procedure. Moreover, as we have seen in Chapter Three, even Bernard's use of the steps on the ladder of Benedict should not be taken at face value but proved to be as cyclical as anything else. Angelic death then, being life hidden with God, is preceded by a long series of allusions to death and dying at different levels of meaning. Bernard opts for this procedure rather than having a clear-cut itinerary consisting of phrases borrowed from real life. As from Sermon 48 death is in the air, only to culminate in Sermon 52 in the simplicity—and the contemplative void—of the angelic way of dying. This rhetorical organisation of the discourse is a technique often used by Bernard. Starting with a casual dropping of a word or idea such as death, then developing that single word or idea into thematic sets such as life, death, shadow, existence, memory, forgetting, he creates clusters which, floating around without any apparent coherence, in the end turn out to have directed the train of thought all along.

What then does this particular cluster, with death culminating in angelic death at its centre, consist of? First and foremost it is of shadow:

In his longed for shadow I am seated. The prophet says: 'A spirit before our face is Christ the Lord, in his shadow we will live among the pagans, in the light with the angels'...

You see that faith is both life and the shadow of life. On the other hand, a life spent amid pleasures, since it is not by faith, is both death and the shadow of death...To set the mind on the flesh is death. It is also the shadow of death, of that death which torments into eternity. We too once sat in darkness and the shadow of death...Now however we have passed from the shadow of life, or rather we have passed from death to life and live in the shadow of Christ, provided we are alive and not dead. (SC 48 III 6–8; transl. Walsh 1979: 16–9)

From whatever angle one looks at it, life is evidently a shadow, either with death as its final destination or sustained by faith as a reflection of a brightness yet to come. In the latter sense of being sustained by faith, life is anticipation of its own fulness of being which is hidden with Christ in God. Thus it is also anticipation of

the angelic way of dying which is performed in contemplation. And if there is any dissatisfaction felt in this process, it is due to the lack of progress caused by the interfering shadows of the other form of death, less sublime and more sinful. Almost in tears (*Quod flens dico*) Bernard has to admit having fallen short of the set goal of reaching the bliss of angelic contemplation:

In tears I ask: How long shall we smell and not taste, gazing toward the fatherland, and not taking possession, sighing for it and saluting from afar? O Truth, homeland of the exiles, end of their exile! I see you, but held back by the flesh I may not enter. Filthy with sins, I am not fit to be admitted. (SC 50 III 8; transl. Walsh 1979: 37)

The predicament of the pilgrim, squeezed in between those two appearances of death, seems far from pleasant as well as far from simple. The situation is further complicated if one realizes that anticipation of the contemplative life cannot be taken literally. For it is hard to see how the 'likeness of purity' by its very nature can be anticipated at all without becoming self-contradictory, since by its very nature purity seems to rule out the possibility of likeness. If there is any preliminary effect of angelic life to be detected in the present monastic order, it will be in the form of a self-contained cluster rather than of an analogy; a cluster which brings into effect the hidden power of angelic death. Aside from dealing with shadows, this death manifests itself—as the second characteristic of the cluster—in the guise of oblivion. This process of forgetting applies not only to the sinful things which lie behind, but, more generally, it aims at removing all obstacles which detract from pure contemplation by turning the present delay of contemplation into an unfulfilled and detestable past.

quae retro sunt obliviscens, ad ea quae ante sunt me extendo/forgetting what lies behind, I strain forward to what lies ahead.

It is at the very meeting point of those two extremes figuring in this Pauline text, *retro* and *ante*, that Bernard¹ locates the practice of monastic life, structured to the order of love (*ordinatio caritatis*). Out of the depth of exile one cries:

O Wisdom, reaching mightily from end to end in establishing and controlling things sweetly by enriching the affections and setting them in order! (SC 50 III 8; transl. Walsh 1979: 35)

The very mention of order in the context of a deathly void might sound ironic. And ironic it is. Admittedly, the shape of this order is clear enough. On the one hand, there is the effective/actual love, on the other, the affective love. There is the love of Martha and the love of Mary, of Leah and of Rachel. And although the former is indispensable for 'making a living', the latter is preferable if one wants to die the death of contemplation. The question, however, of how that blessed state is to be achieved reveals a paradox which confronts the would-be contemplator. On the one hand there are the cursed necessities of every day monastic life in which the petty concerns and troubles of the community prevent one from enjoying a proper contemplative rest. On the other hand, those very same necessities provide the desire for contemplative rest with the opportunity of being heightened by the almost ritualized impossibility of achieving it.

With this last remark we touch upon the limit of what seems to be possible in interpreting Bernard. Of course, it is my own, not Bernard's, perception that interruption of rest is a requirement for its coming about just as it is my own perception that it is precisely this elusive moment of failure which is ritualized by Bernard. On being asked whether or not he should be taken at his word when complaining about the lack of rest in the monastery, Bernard will either refuse to answer, referring to his 'timidity', or pretend not to understand what we are talking about. In other words, all he expects us to do is to take him literally. From that point of view, denying the contingency of his being interrupted in his contemplative rest would explode the effect of heightened suspense. Yet, without destroying this factor of contingency, ritualization continues to make itself felt to the reader through the description of effective and affective love. Not being able to tell exactly what is going on, we tentatively say the following. Bernard is using the preestablished ritual nature of the world he lives in (here represented by the *ordinatio caritatis*) to bring about 'authenticity'. Next he proceeds to transform this 'authenticity' into a further ritual in which both he and his community and audience have become part of the same contingent event which momentarily threatened to interrupt the

pattern of their peaceful existence. In both cases there is an interruption, not only of rest but also of meaning. Eventually, rite coincides as little with the mechanics of the set pattern as the 'contingent' event coincides with its own freedom to come about. In one way or another interruption of the monastic rhythm bears the hallmark of death. This has become crystal clear in the analysis of *De gradibus humilitatis et superbiae*. Just as at the end of that treatise the final intensification of humility was brought about by calling back the monk who had gone astray, condemned to a life of drifting outside the monastery, here the mindless call for attention from the monastic busy bees threatens to disrupt the life-line of contemplative rest. Yet incorporation of contingent interruptions into the very process of contemplation is intended to articulate what might otherwise end up in the void of sheer oblivion. The forgetting of what lies behind and the straining forward to what lies ahead do indeed coincide in a timeless moment in which what lies ahead—death as the *puritatis similitudo*, the likeness of purity—is brought forward and comes to merge with the act of forgetting former obstacles to contemplation.

So much is clear then. The order of love, though consisting of an active and an affective part, does not tolerate a neat division into two distinct stages, the one leading up to the other. Evidently, the reciprocity between the different forms of love and death, demand from the writer—and reader, for that matter—an account that matches their intertwined occurrence.

The only way to comprehend Bernard's strategy is to observe him working towards greater clarity. In Sermons 50, 51 and 52 he slowly develops the idea of the *ordinatio caritatis*/'the setting in order of love', just to end up three times in succession lamenting the interrupted rest. The following lengthy quotation from Sermon 50 illustrates the subtle dilemmas in which one is caught during one's quest for contemplation:

There is an affection brought about by the flesh, there is one governed by reason and one established by wisdom. About the first one the Apostle says that it neither is, nor can be, subjected to the law of God; about the second one he remarks, on the contrary, that it is in accordance with the law of God because it is good. For there is no doubt that the contentious (affection) differs greatly from the harmonious one. The third

one, however, differs completely from both the others since it experiences them and appreciates that the Lord is sweet, eliminating the first and rewarding the second. For the first is sweet but bad; the second dry but strong; the third fat and sweet. Therefore the second produces works, and love resides in her, though it is not the affective love which, fattening the products of wisdom, brings the mind much sweetness of the Lord. It is, however, rather an active love which, though not yet refreshing the mind suavely with that sweet love, burns ardently with love for that love proper. 'Do not love,' he says, 'by word or tongue, but by deed and truth.'

Do you see how cautiously he [i.e. the Psalmist] has to move between the vicious and the affective love, at the same time setting apart from those two the active and salubrious love? With regard to this love he refuses to accept the fiction of a lying tongue, but neither does he demand the taste of affective wisdom. 'By work,' he says, 'we shall love and by truth', that we might be moved to do well rather by the impulse of living truth than by the affection of that wise love. 'He has set love in order in me.' Which of the two do you think he means? Both, but in reverse order. For the active love is concerned primarily with the lower, the affective love with the loftier, things. Admittedly, there is no doubt that the mind rightly touched by the affection prefers the love of God to the love of man, heaven to earth, eternity to the temporal, the soul to the flesh. Yet in a well-ordered action we often, or even always, find the opposite. For as to the concern for our neighbour, we are increasingly forced to occupy ourselves with his problems. With ever more diligent zeal we attend to the weak. And the needs and rights of mankind cause us to give more attention to peace on earth than to the glory in heaven. And the unrest caused by the concern for the temporal hardly allows us a sense of the eternal. And almost without interruption we are in the service of our languid bodies, postponing the care for our souls. Doing more elaborate honour to our weaker members, according to the word of the Apostle, we somehow fulfil the word of the Lord: 'The first will be the last and the last the first.' Who can doubt that the man who prays speaks to the Lord? How often then are we, set in order by love,

disturbed and drawn away because of those who need our word or deed! How often does pious rest make way, piously, for the tumult of business! How often, has the book to be laid aside in good faith and to be replaced by the sweat of manual work! How often do we skip celebrating mass and give priority to the just execution of earthly business! A preposterous order. But necessity knows no law. That is why active love creates order with the authority of a paterfamilias. Beginning with the things at hand she is certainly just and righteous because she has no personal preference nor is she after material gains but she cares for the needs of man.

Affective love is different, though. For she takes her order from the things which come first. There is a wisdom that makes things known the way they really are, so that, for instance, the affection itself feels those things in a more elevated fashion which nature holds in higher esteem, less so with regard to lesser things, and minimally with regard to what is minimal. And the order of active love is made by truth whereas the love of truth claims for itself the order of affective love. For love is truly in the former if those who need it more are first in receiving it. On the other hand, love-like truth manifests itself in the latter, if through affection we keep the order which active love keeps by reason.

You then, if you love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, with your whole power, if you have ignited that love for love which satisfies active love, leaping through a more burning affection, through divine love itself, to which He is the step, after having received the fulness of the Spirit, then God is himself experienced by you, though not really totally as He is, which is quite impossible for any creature, but certainly as it is given you to know. Next you will experience [Him as part of] yourself as you are feeling that you will have no other source for love of yourself than the degree to which you yourself are part of God. For you will pour out in Him the full source of your love. You will, I dare say, experience [Him as part of] yourself as you are when through the experience of your love and affection which you

have with regard to yourself, you will discover that you are worth nothing even as far as loved by yourself except because of Him; you, who are nothing without Him. (SC 50 II 4–III 6)

Ordo praeposterus!...At non ita affectualis; nam a primis ducit ordinem. 'Preposterous order!...Affective love, though, is different. For it takes its order from the things which come first...'

Now one way to read this passage is to consider it a description of a mystical path beginning at the negative stage of carnal affection and culminating in a mystical state, or, at least, in the desire for such a state. On a basic level that is indeed what happens. At the same time, however, this linear order is delayed and interrupted by the *ordo praeposterus* of every day life. In that respect too Bernard's language is experimental. He can be seen struggling to grasp the traffic between the effective and affective orders. That very process threatens to get out of hand all the time. Next this preposterous order is flatly and bravely contradicted by the *At non ita affectualis*. The affective order really begins where one ought to begin: the things which come first/*a primis*. So, if, for instance, a man is praying,—the quintessential activity of the monk—, he is talking, i.e. he is on line with God. That is what the things which come first are about. That same man, like everybody else, has the starting-point of his existence in *caro*/flesh, i.e. in activities far remote from the tranquillity of prayer. And even affection which as such is supposed to be beyond the world of action starts with the flesh. Before being governed by reason and wisdom there is, however rejectable, 'an affection created by the flesh'/*affectio quam caro gignit*. As a result, the *At non ita affectualis*, the claim that the affection begins where it ought to begin *a primis*, is in a sense suspended. That is why affective love will always manifest itself as fragile. The love of the active order can still be articulated, the love of the affective order does not only live under the permanent threat of destructive interruptions from outside but almost vanishes in the source of its being. So, a price has to be paid for the adequacy achieved in wisdom. While it may be true enough that in the area of affective love things become known in their true proportions: *pluris pluris, minora minus, minima minime*, Bernard here clearly makes the self shrink to minimal size. Forgetting what lies behind, it is about to be absorbed in its source, the origin of its own desire. The simultaneity, however, of the ideal reality of this origin, the

starting-point of the *a primis*, and the preposterous order of every day (monastic) life, produces a kind of third order which represents the 'real' state of the monastic mind. There is the irritation caused by the inaccessibility of the contemplative bliss, culminating in the following lament:

I say this in tears:

How long do we smell but not taste
seeing the homeland but not taking possession,
sighing and saluting it from afar?

O Truth, homeland of the exiled, end of exile!

I see you but I am not allowed to enter,
being held back by the flesh...

Quod flens dico:

*quousque odoramus et non gustamus
prospicientes patriam et non apprehendentes,
suspirantes et de longe salutantes?*

O Veritas, exsulum patria, exsilii finis!

*Video te, sed intrare non sinor,
carne retentus...*

This lamentable state of inadequacy was preceded by a passage in which Bernard had 'depersonalized' the self/*ipsum* even further, holding it in even greater suspense by making it completely hypothetical.

Show me a man who loves God before all things, and himself and his neighbour in as far as they love Him; his enemy as someone who may love in the future; further, his parents in the flesh more familiarly because of nature, but his spiritual teachers more abundantly because of grace, and suppose him to be striving for all the other things ordered by divine love in this manner, despising the earth and longing for heaven, using this world as if not using it, distinguishing in the inner wisdom of his mind between what is to be used and what is to be enjoyed, and taking care of the transitory things in a transitory manner and dealing with what is necessary in as far as it is necessary, embracing the eternal in an eternal embrace, I say, show me such a man, and I shall boldly proclaim him wise,

because he can appreciate things as they really are, and he can truthfully boast and say: 'He set love in order in me.' But where is that man, or when will that happen? *Quod flens dico:...* (SC 50 III 8)

So, besides being hypothetical by nature, reaching the final state of affective love seems to be a matter of bluff. But whose boasting qualities suffice to bring about fulfilment? Reality looks different. There, affective love stretches from the flesh which creates affection to the flesh holding back the soul's desire for lightness. In that process this love does not cease to return to *caro*/flesh. Consequently, it is never far removed from the world of active love which is so much closer to flesh.

In the next sermon, Sermon 51, which contains a comment on the text 'Strengthen me with flowers, surround me with apples for I languish with love', Bernard seems almost resigned to this inevitable course of events. Once more he points to the necessity of delay in order to keep desire going.

For the subtraction of things you love heightens desire, and that which you desire the more ardently, you miss the more badly.

However, in the meantime this sombre train of events has, in turn, been suddenly interrupted. The improbability of achieving rest at the end of Sermon 50 here finds its counterpart in the reality of the sweet odour of the opening words of Sermon 51:

FULCITE ME FLORIBUS, STIPATE ME MALIS, QUIA AMORE LANGUEO/Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick with love (Cant. 2,5).

Now languish is a phenomenon which by definition only occurs after the bride's encounter with the bridegroom. It represents the nostalgia with regard to a past experience, it is the desire for more:

who has drunk, will thirst for more/*QUI BIBIT, ADHUC SITIET*

So, in spite of the pessimistic view voiced at the end of Sermon 50, in between that sermon and the next one the bride and bridegroom appear to have met secretly. Not that Bernard bothers to inform his reader about this matter. As for the reader, all he can see after the

hypothetical end of Sermon 50 is that, abruptly, as if a switch has been turned on, desperation disappears and sweet memories enter. On the rhetorical level this untold encounter is signified by flowers as the idyllic reminders of what has been going on in the *locus amoenus*. It looks as if, in the absence of final results, it is words, in this case the words from the Canticle, which touch the barren soul caught up in the disorder of active life, *retentus carne*. As a result, even the desperate outcry at the end of Sermon 50: *video te, sed intrare non sinor, carne retentus*, should in retrospect be called languishment rather than mere exclusion. The end of the monastic itinerary which leaves the monk standing *draußen vor der Tür* refers back to an idyllic past rather than a hopeless future. 'Forgetting what is behind' and 'straying towards what is ahead' are thus 'recycled' into one single process of remembering. Eventually, it is in the ever present *locus* of the monastery that the progressing monk recovers the self he has been all along.

This circular shape of Bernard's monastic existence causes, it seems, interruptions, whether intra- or extramural, to be theatrical by definition. Of course, pure contemplation should be enjoyed without those interruptions. But what form of life can be uninterruptedly circular? Such a life would be the same as death, even if it were the death of the angels.

Before elaborating, in Sermon 52, on this angelic death where the *puritatis similitudo* reigns, Bernard once more observes himself performing the 'material' duties of the abbot. Here a counter-image is given to the hypothetical 'Show me a man' from Sermon 50, which reveals the trivial nature of the abbot's existence. On first inspection that hypothetically happy man and the troubled abbot are far from being one and the same person. No *similitudo puritatis* here. But what are we to make of the way Bernard introduces this new round of dealing with interruptions?

I tell you the personal experience I have gone through/*Loquor vobis experimentum meum quod expertus sum*.

A certain form of identity seems to emerge here. It appears as if, contracted into one *experimentum*, a third person is holding the former two together. In a way, both the *da mihi hominem*/'show me

a man' at the end of Sermon 50 and the *loquor experimentum meum*/'I talk of my own experience' remind one of St. Paul's 'detached' account of his mystical rapture in the second letter to the Corinthians:

I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth) such an one caught up to the third heaven... (2 Corinth. 12,2)

At the end of Sermon 50 Bernard had, as it were, transformed Paul's announcement 'I knew a man' into the *da mihi hominem*/'show me a man', thereby stressing the intrinsically hypothetical nature of the life of affective love. Here, however, he uses his *experimentum meum* still echoing Paul's dreamy 'I knew a man', to pin down the loftiness of his own contemplation by confronting it with, and drawing it within, his own down to earth existence. So, if achievement of bliss at the end of Sermon 50 looked like a matter of boasting and bluff, the present boastful experience (*experimentum meum loquor quod expertus sum*) might be called double bluff.

Thus a certain convergence of active and contemplative love can be seen to emerge, as if the hypothetical part and the real experience of day-to-day life are coming together.

Loquor vobis experimentum meum quod expertus sum/I tell you the personal experience I have been through. If ever I see that some of you have made progress because of my admonitions, then I will not be sorry, I admit, for having preferred the labour of my sermons to my own peace and quiet. When, for instance, after my sermon an irascible person will be found meek, a proud one humble, a weakling powerful, when further the meek, the humble and the powerful will be seen to have grown in their grace and to have become even better than they were, and if those who were hesitant and slow with regard to the spiritual studies, being recalcitrant and sleepy, turn out to have come alive, bent on the word of the Lord which has been aroused in them and have woken up, and if those who had deserted the source of wisdom having dug for themselves cisterns of their self will which were unable to hold water—reason why they murmured in their arid heart burdened by every order, having no moisture of devotion in them—, when,

I say, out of the dew of the word and the rain of the will which God has set apart for his heirs, those people are proven to flourish again and do works of obedience, having become cooperative in everything and devoted, then, I tell you, no sadness will enter my mind because of the interrupted study of fruitful contemplation for I will be surrounded by such flowers and fruits of devotion. Where the fruits of your indebtedness grow in profusion around me I patiently accept being torn away from the fruitful embraces of Rachel. The interruption of my leisure in order to prepare a sermon will not trouble me in the least when I shall see my seed germinating in you and an increase in the growth of the harvest of your righteousness. For love, which does not seek what is its own, has long since easily convinced me not to prefer my own cherished desires to your gain. To pray, to read, to write, to meditate, or any other gains that may result from the study of spiritual things: these I consider loss because of you. (SC 51 II 3)

Clearly, on the level of Bernard's commentary on The Song of Songs, the text under consideration *FULCITE ME FLORIBUS*—the odour of the flowers—is continued and extended. The sweet memories of a past experience between bride and groom are here transformed into flowers. Even though the products of interrupted contemplation, they have not completely lost their original sweetness.

When in the next sermon, Sermon 52, Bernard has yet another go at the life of affective love, he describes it, as we have seen, in terms of the 'death of the angels'. Whosoever reaches that stage is able to transcend the memory of things present and live in pure, angelic 'conversation', in the *puritatis similitudo*. Here the interruptions seem to have gone, the bride being soundly asleep, be it that the hypothetical nature of the event still holds:

Sed da mihi qui illuc pervenerit: incunctanter fateor quiescentem/give me someone who has come so far: I will not hesitate to pronounce him at rest.

The text under consideration:

*ADIURO VOS, FILIAE IERUSALEM, PER CAPREAS CER-
VOSQUE CAMPORUM, NE SUSCITETIS NEQUE EVI-
GILARE FACIATIS DILECTAM, QUOADUSQUE IPSA*

VELIT/I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes,
and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my
love, till she please... (Cant. 2,7)

in which the companions of the bride are urgently begged not to disturb her in her sleep has to be taken literally: the abbot should be left in peace. Accordingly, before once more being made part of the abbot's duty, the complaint with which the sermon ends almost sounds bitter.

There are some among those sitting here who would do well to take to heart what is being said in this verse [not to disturb the *dilecta*]. Let them realise how much reverence they owe their superiors. By disturbing the latters' rest, they make themselves unpopular with the citizens of heaven. When realising that they might begin to have a bit more consideration than usual and stop imposing themselves in an irreverent and thoughtless manner when we are at rest (*cum vacamus*). As they know very well, rare is the hour allotted to me in which I do not have visitors, even when they support me very patiently. (SC 52 IV 7)

Thus the excursus about contemplative sleep and the death of the angels seems to end on an inconclusive note, suggesting once more that it is interruptions that ultimately set the pattern. Pattern is indeed the word which springs to mind when one tries to survey the coming about of effective and affective love. The interruptions themselves appear to be ritualised into a fixed course of events. As soon as Bernard embarks on the realisation of love and death, repetition of the by now familiar drawbacks is the order of the day. But that is not his final achievement. Ritualization of events as such is not an exceptional phenomenon. Yet the pattern of ritualization becomes a special literary adventure if Bernard can succeed in bringing out the contingent/unique and the ritual simultaneously.

In the meantime, the literariness of the scheme of moving backwards and forwards, of forgetting and desire, has broken down. For it has become evident that the very interruptions which force the abbot to forget about his rest coincide with the 'flowers' of memory, just as the hypothetical man who manages to achieve contemplation coincides with the abbot's experience/*experimentum* in which he recounts how he voluntarily gives up the embraces in

the arms of Rachel to have the seed of his tongue bear fruit. Inside the remote centre of that same person is the author-abbot who, being neither merely hypothetical nor merely real, has momentarily identified himself—at least, so his narration goes—with the bride who is asleep in the *locus amoenus*, in the *puritatis similitudo*. That is the invisible moment, the rare hour—‘your life hidden with Christ in God’—the odour of which is spread by the flowers of memory.

We might call ‘the death of the angels’ an uninterrupted circle. ‘For you are dead and your life is hidden with Christ in God.’ Obviously, it is not enough for the monastery to represent ordered love in its purity against the confusion and interventions of worldly activities. Life within its walls is hidden: a *vita abscondita*. Whatever external and internal activities can be discerned are attached in one way or another to this secret source and need to be judged accordingly. From this monastic point of view, active love is no longer a prelude to contemplation. Rather it should be considered part of a drama in which all can participate but which cannot bear the absence of a single one. And yet what Bernard seems to be doing all the time is creating missing links as if to destroy the completeness of his play. Theoretically speaking, contemplation as an uninterrupted circle brings the realization of angelic purity within reach. For dramatic reasons of the utmost urgency, however, it seems more convenient to interpret this ‘hidden life’/*vita abscondita* in terms of exile and shadows—at least, for the time being. Thus the effect of angelic likeness of purity is guaranteed, in the same way as death is the meeting point of the literal and the spiritual, the active and the contemplative, memory and oblivion.

This is the most that can be said about the remarkable coincidence of ritual pattern and contingent events in Bernard’s account of monastic death. The *rara hora*, set aside for the abbot’s contemplation which is under permanent threat of interruptions—and can therefore be called ‘ritually’ rare—echoes the remote *rara hora*, the *dimidia hora*—of mystical experience, the life hidden with Christ in God. In the end it is hard, if not impossible, to tell them apart. By reducing the self to a tiny spot in the presence of God, Bernard manages to ‘depersonalize’ himself thus enabling himself to be the busy abbot and the contemplative monk all at the same

time. In doing so, he does not keep the benefits of his flexible identity to himself. By regarding 'to pray, to read, to meditate as a loss' he returns to his fellow-monks who are as much entitled to contemplation as their abbot. Thus we can begin to specify their share in the game. Initially, they had been told not to bother the sleeping bride with their petty concerns. However, their very concerns now having become part of a ritualised pattern, their unexpected dramatic potential is brought out. The naughty and mindless monks who interrupted the rest of their abbot turn out to be players in a magic garden where anything goes. Like 'the young girls' / *adolescentulae* in the Canticle they are under strict orders not to awake the bride. Ignoring that order they are no more trespassing than when, being the busy bodies they are, they happen to doze off during the sweet Canticle-inspired words spoken by their abbot—only to be woken up from the slumber of their little death by the touch of his magic rod.¹⁹

5. From dust to dust

It is time now to return once more to Sermon 26 for a rerun of the sequence of events. In the light of what we have learnt about the nature of contemplative love and death, can that sermon still be said to fit in with this picture or should it rather be affirmed as the exception to the Rule which it seems to be?

In Sermon 26 Bernard's point of departure was the exact opposite of angelic, spiritual death, the occasion for the lament being the blunt fact of Gerard's passing away. Yet in spite of the crude literalism underlying the outburst of grief, the cluster of death themes here obtains equally. In the absence of his brother the realm

¹⁹ SC 36 IV 6; SBOP 2: 8. 'Sed attendite cetera. An potius pausandum est propter somnolentos? Putabam me uno sermone implere quod promisi de duplici ignorantia, et fecissem, nisi fastidiosis longior videretur. Quosdam siquidem oscitantes, et quosdam dormitantes intueor. Nec mirum: praecedentis noctis vigiliae longissimae quippe fuerunt et excusant eos. Verum illis quid dicam, qui et tunc dormierunt, et modo nihilominus dormiunt? Sed non pergo nunc ulterius exagitare verecundiam eorum: sufficit tetigisse. Puto quod melius deinceps vigilabunt nostrae observationis cauterium verituri. In hac spe gerimus eis morem vice hac; et quod continuandam ratio exigebat, eorum caritate, pendente licet disputatione, partimur, facientes finem ubi non erat finis.'

of Bernard's existence is shadowy, more now than ever. And it is precisely the looseness of shadows—the inconsistency of their organisation—which provided Bernard with the opportunity for the introduction of bitter-sweet irony. It appears that the brothers have changed places after all; a change which has shaken the very foundation of monastic, ordered life to its very roots. Bernard being replaced as the professional contemplator by his brother, the humble labourer, schooled in the active and effective life: the world is turned upside down. The quiet superiority of the monk and abbot, who in pursuit of freedom before God had himself taken care of as an angelic prince, is now overtaken by the short cut by which Gerard has achieved eternal bliss. Being dead like an angel—as dead as dead can be—he is out of reach for his beloved brother however impressive the latter's contemplative qualities may be. There is a legitimate reason, then, for Bernard, desperately to cry out to his brother not to forget him. All of a sudden the monastery which, by definition, is the supreme memorial of celestial order, proves to be nothing but a structureless, murky affair. For where death reigns, oblivion is never far off.

In a subtle process of forgetting and remembering, as we have seen, Bernard brings back to mind the activities of Gerard. His was the life of the quintessential Benedictine monk at work: in the buildings, in the fields, at the streams, in the gardens.

He was most useful to me, useful in little and big things, in private and in public matters, externally and internally. Rightly I was completely dependant on him who was everything to me. All he left me was the honour and name of provider, for it was he who did the work. I was called abbot, but it was he who was preeminent in solicitude. For good reason my spirit rested in him who created the opportunity for me to enjoy myself in the Lord, to preach more freely and to pray more safely. (SC 26 V 7)

Once more, however, oblivion strikes back. The one and only person who gave life to the mechanics of the monastic order of love as evoked by the picture of the fields, the streams, the gardens, the labourers—and somewhere inside all that the meditating abbot—is no more. Disappearing into heaven Gerard has taken with him the key to the structure of remembering which makes the Benedictine

monastery work. It now appears that, the world of external activities having vanished, the contemplative monk cannot survive for long. As a result, there is no other conclusion for Bernard to draw from this situation than that it is he and not his brother who is affected by death.

The Lord has touched and shaken me, not him whom He has called to rest; it is me whom He has killed when He cut my brother off. (SC 26 V 8)

If, after the abundance of images relating to death, both literally and spiritually, we finally try to economize the discourse and return to bare essentials, the following scene springs to mind:

Indutus sacerdotalibus, solitas in eum orationes proprio ore complevi, terram propriis manibus ex more ieci super dilecti corpus, terram mox futurum./Dressed in the priestly dress, I said the usual prayers for him with my own mouth, and according to custom I threw with my own hands some earth on the corps of the beloved soon to become earth itself.

In fact, 'earth' is all there is to it. Whatever excursus might be made after this scene causing the outburst of grief, which results in a lengthy lament, as soon as it is all over, the same matter-of-fact like environment, the same *locus* remains. So, from the monastic viewpoint the expanding world of imagination—caused either by grief or by joy—is guillotined, so to speak, and brought back to the proportions of its material *locus*. Within the confines of that *locus* a funeral procession might be observed on its way to return a corps to dust. Such an event, however, does not reach beyond the ritual which keeps the place going: the *morimundus*, the staging of death in the buildings, the fields, the gardens. Carrying Gerard to his grave—Gerard, the model-monk, whose own humble life did not exceed the materiality of the monastic site—is but a logical act fitting into this picture.

This then is in the end the self/*ipse* Bernard is lamenting as having gone; the very same self which almost evaporated into the source of its being. He grieves for good reason, it seems, since it turns out to be his own fraternal better self that has vanished. He thus enables the entire gigantic superstructure of affective love life operative in Sermons 50–52 to become transparent, rooted as it is in a fixed *locus* which keeps it down to earth. Whatever meaningful

expansion into the spiritual is tried out, it is there that the affective love finds its origin. For it is not by way of analogy that the order of spiritual death and love develops as if the effective Gerard-like part might be simply contrasted with the affective Bernard-like one. For that there is too much, fraternal, identity in the air. For that the cluster of family-identity is handled in too subtle a manner. Ultimately, the concept of 'family' reminds one of the *figura* which comprises what from an extra-mural point of view is to be called distinctly different identities. In the preceding chapters we have already come across this *figura*. In Sermon 23 on the Song of Songs, for instance, Bernard could be seen to identify both with the bridegroom leaving and the bride being left behind. And in the Apology for the failure of the second crusade he had even managed to associate himself with the prophet Moses, with God commanding the tribes of Israel and with Christ failing to be believed upon his word. There is a sense in which the *figura* produced in Sermon 26 might be called the most intense one. Based on the semantic unity of the word 'father' Bernard's repetitive use of it not only evokes the drama of bitter separation between the two brothers. It also enables us to catch a glimpse of the one and only Father of mankind in whom all fraternal differences (including differences between the contemplative and the active: Rachel and Leah, Mary and Martha, Bernard and Gerard) are resolved. However, far from functioning as a devout solution of the problem of grief and separation, this fatherhood is enacted by its one and only representative *in terra*: the abbot. With a Hitchcock-like brevity the latter makes his appearance, almost unnoticed, in his own film in the guise of God the Father:

And he [Gerard] repeated those words 'Father, in thine hands I commend my spirit' and he sighed frequently. *And turning himself to me* he said with a happy look on his face: 'Father, Father, what great good it is that God deigns to be the Father of mankind! What glory for men to be sons of God, God's heirs! For if they are sons, they are also heirs.'/*Et repetens eundem sermonem, ac frequenter ingeminans: 'Pater, Pater,' conversus ad me, exhilarata quidem facie: 'Quanta,' inquit, 'dignatio Dei, patrem hominem esse! Quanta hominum gloria, Dei filios, Dei esse heredes! Nam si filii, et heredes.'*

Bernard, the father-abbot,—the last of the fathers—about to weep over the body of his dead brother which is on its way back to dust, discovers his *rara hora*, like the remote call of the bridegroom sleeping in the fields at midday, on the same mountain where the prophet Moses met his 'sad and unexpected' fate, in the emptiness of that very same *terra* from which the flowers of memory spring. We may conclude that this is the highest degree of conformity with the life, and death, of the angels, the realisation of *puritatis similitudo*. For, though remaining the bereaved brother he is, the father-abbot makes up for the failure of the monastery to live up to its reputation as the guarantee of the paradisiacal and undivided presence of all angelic brothers. Ultimately, it is in his *figura*, in his *vita abscondita*, his hidden presence in Christ and God that paradise is regained and the *temps perdu* rediscovered. Along that line, being performed in the monastery, even the Requiem mass is affected by the likeness of angelic purity. Interruptions—including the interruption of death—have become part of such a strong, incantational ritual, that no extra-mural event will ever be able to disrupt the massiveness of so dramatic a process.

No outside interruption... In that respect one last remark should be made with regard to the order of the narration. What, then, besides the obviously dramatic effect of the funeral scene, was Bernard's final intention in changing the order of events through a *husteron proteron*, beginning with himself standing at his brother's grave and ending with the pact of Viterbo? As things stand, Viterbo clearly functions as the supreme interruption from the outside, reminding the mourning Bernard of what he had forgotten: the deal with his Commendatore:

*Don Giovanni, a cenar teco invitasti
M'invitasti e son venuto!*

For one single moment it looks as if the Italian light, shining in from the extra-mural world, breaks the somber spell hanging over the monastic site. That reminder can, in turn, be seen as a reference to yet another *rara hora*, an indivisible point in time. As a call from a remote past it brings the murky *terra* of the monastery tending towards the disorderly, back into line. It thus sets limits to unbound sorrow:

Quid plura? Repetisti commendatum, recepisti tuum. Finem verborum indicunt lacrimae; tu illis, Domine, finem modumque indixeris/What further? You repeated your order, you have received what is yours as you should. Tears indicate the end of words. May it please you, o Lord, to indicate their end and measure.

PART IV

A WAY OF CELEBRATING

INTRODUCTION PART IV

A WAY OF CELEBRATING

From dust to dust: such turned out to be the scope of the monastic imagination. If there is any life to be detected in this *nature morte*, it may be the slow motion of monks working in the fields, singing in the church and meditating in the cloister. But even the flight of the contemplative imagination is forced to return to matter and dust when it finds its highest expression in the down-to-earth *figura* of the lovers' violent and nocturnal embrace 'amongst the lilies' and of the abbot-priest standing at his brother's grave: *terram propriis manibus ex more ieci super dilecti corpus, terram mox futurum...*

Are those lovers, and is this mourning abbot, performing rites? In the preceding chapters we have seen how the intrusion of violent and uncontrollable emotions such as love and death had shaken the monastery to its foundations while at the same time becoming part of the rhythm and ritual of liturgy and preaching. However, those two clusters, love and death on the one hand, and the liturgical/monastic body on the other, have not become fully integrated yet. Although drawn within the monastic circle and purged of the dimensions of space and time, love and death have not been 'ontologically' transformed into the uninterrupted chain of songs and prayers. However contracted into the narrow space of their new habitat, they still are the subject of story-telling. It is the *figura* of the monastic author who is called upon to shape his ritual existence so as to lay bare its intrinsically epic and lyrical qualities. His task is to tell us about the adventures, the hopes and despair of the monastic traveller without the latter, for one moment, leaving the *terra* that encompasses his uneventful way of life.

If then, in the next three chapters, I outline Bernard's literary recreation of the highlights of the Christian liturgy—the Nativity, the Lord's Passion, Easter and Pentecost—the underlying assumption will be that this uninterrupted chain of the *laus perennis* takes on the shape of broken dreams. By that I mean that the story of success and failure in love as told in Part II, A Way of Writing, and

continued in Part III, *A Way of Living*, is to be reenacted in the very heart of the monastery itself, that is, in the untouchable centre of its ultimate *figura*: Christ incarnate. The very nature of a *figura* being the establishment of a link between the past and the present, it will be up to Bernard, besides being a figure of historical, extra-mural importance, a monastic author in charge of the King's *cubiculum* and a father-abbot presiding over the orderly handling of love and death in the monastery, to be born, to suffer, to die, to rise from the dead and to disappear into heaven. This is no mean goal to set oneself and yet it is exactly what Bernard claims to be doing. If there is one thing which might save him from collapsing under this self-imposed burden, it will be the fact that there is room for failure. For, appearances notwithstanding, the monastic version of the *laus perennis* does allow for falling short of the continuity of mythical-liturgical time, not only as a matter of chance but, intrinsically, as a matter of course. After all, life in the monastery appears to be nothing but a broken dream. What, then, does so fragile a dream look like?

Let us once more recall the image of Philip's short cut, his *compendium viae*, on his way to Jerusalem. Purged of the dimensions of space and time this young man's travelling had been contracted and concentrated in the monastery of Clairvaux where he had joined the choir of the heavenly citizens. So much the worse for the extra-mural world, so Bernard seemed to suggest in his reply to the objections of Philip's bishop, thereby implicitly encouraging that world to count its blessings in being demythologised in the process.

Now it would be wrong to conclude from this spectacular arrival that the monk, upon entering the monastery, finds his mini-Jerusalem ready for immediate habitation. Not only is its Ur-model, the heavenly Jerusalem, though beyond our concept of space and time, to be thought of as consisting of enormous, immeasurable dimensions. Even more alarmingly, Christ himself, who is the creator of the universe, transcends the grasp of human comprehension by his sheer size. Earlier theologians had expressed the miracle of Christ's incarnation in terms of a *verbum abbreviatum*, an abbreviated word, meaning that the Ruler of the universe had contracted himself to the dimensions of earthly space and time. Bernard, for his part, borrows this concept of the *verbum abbreviatum* from his predecessors,

thereby slightly twisting it so as to make it serve monastic purposes. In fact, he turns it into a counter-image of the short cut taken in the extra-mural world. By applying yet another *compendium viae* to the gigantic dimensions of sacred history, he once more reduces a reality to its bare essentials. Put into narrative terms, we can observe Bernard once more cutting a long story short. Within the walls of the monastery that story boils down to the movement 'from dust to dust'. For, the monastic author who sets out to describe the workings of sacred time and history is first and foremost confronted with the reality of *terra*, earth and dust. From that point of view, Christ himself, even in his incarnate, that is, in his reduced and contracted shape, does not manifest himself primarily in the recognisable features by which we know him from sacred history. All that is visible to the monastic eye is the reality of the 'raw and the cooked' contracted in the *terra* of the monastic site both in its wildness and its architectural and liturgical design. That very *terra* contains the germs of memory from which a reconstruction of Christ's life, love and death may spring.

This priority of the *terra* of the monastic environment should not be interpreted in terms of a *sensus litteralis*, and even the use of 'spiritual' as a kind of extension of the literal is not entirely correct. Moreover, in the Introduction to Part II it has been pointed out that the spiritual/artificial is in a sense prior to the literal. By using *terra* as an overall description of monastic life and literature¹ I mean to say that imagination and memory are contracted into, and contained by, a material design: the site of the monastery. Far from being a kind of *materia prima*, unrelated to whatever meaning might be given to it, the *terra* of the monastery is memory and imagination right from the beginning: *esse est percipi*. In this particular case, then, *locus* and *imago* seem to coincide, reality being indistinguishable from dreams.

As a consequence, this same *terra* of the monastic site conditions and controls the sequence of celebrations going on within its

¹ Although I have hitherto been using the image of the monastic site as a kind of heuristic metaphor in order to get a better grip of Bernard's literary movements, the real *terra* of that site and Christ's appearance in it and disappearance from it through the liturgical highlights will prove to be inextricably intertwined. I shall elaborate on this in the second paragraph of Chapter Nine: *Tristes tropiques*.

borders. As the garden of delight it is the place where liturgical dreams about Christ's incarnation come true: *et paradisus noster Christus dominus est*. But, when all is said and done, that is, after all the stages of Christ's incarnation have been realised and celebrated, that same place is nothing but the empty spot of hard labour and penitence, where the monk is left behind by Christ departing for heaven just as the bride in the poem *Foebus abierat* had been abandoned by her lover: broken dreams... However, that is not the end of the story. Finding himself again in that very same *terra* in which the treasures of his memory are buried, Bernard's monk can be seen to resume his dreaming activities of chant and prayer clustering them into one protracted cry for the return of the Stranger.

Before turning to Bernard's description of the Christian feastdays proper, I deal with the nature of his style and composition. So far we have been able to apply a method of close reading to texts which fitted that purpose on account of their more or less coherent form. However, an analysis of the monastic celebrations as proposed above requires a slightly different approach. The monastic site conditioning Bernard's image-production demands a literary structure which does justice to its contracted shape, its being a *verbum abbreviatum*.² In the preceding chapters it has become clear to which extent digression, delay and withdrawal were used by Bernard as rhetorical devices to bring about brief moments of intensity. The literary timidity in Sermon 23 on the Song of Songs, the wanderings of the descending monk in The degrees of Humility and Pride, the languor of desire and postponement in the Mariological sermons and the distractions from contemplative love in the Canticle Sermons: all those circumlocutions served the purpose of contraction and brevity.

If we take Bernard's texts to be a kind of *terra*, a linguistic body containing the vast memory reservoirs of mainly biblical material which is about to be spun out in countless configurations, the question rises as to how the contracted *verba abbreviata* fit in with this slowly unwinding stream. How are we supposed to read

² See De Lubac 1961: 181–97. De Lubac (195) traces the origin of the idea of Christ as the 'abbreviated consummation of history' back to Origen.

Bernard's reconstruction of the language and logic of the Bible? If we manage to catch the moment in which delay and withdrawal are cut short, where does that leave Bernard's text, both delay and contraction being an intrinsic part of it? To trace delay and withdrawal as such does not seem so complicated since somehow they correspond to the natural development of a sermon or a commentary.³ But what about the combination of expansion and brevity? How do we read and recognise this particular 'dimensionality' introduced by the *verbum abbreviatum* into the Bernardine text?

To get a better grip of Bernard's use of short cuts in the field of sacred history I shall proceed as follows. In an excursus about Suger of St. Denis' and Bernard's views on art I shall explore the different ways in which those two authors have been thought to organise their discourse. Compared to Suger's well-structured 'philosophy of art' Bernard appears to be quite primitive and uncoordinated. And it is precisely the reflection of the lack of artistic control in his writings, the blindness to art and form, that has always been a source of irritation for his opponents and a source of embarrassment for his admirers.

Now, in my reconstruction of Bernard's way of writing, living and celebrating, this *communis opinio* suspecting him of a tendency towards the disorderly may serve to underscore the qualities of his prose. For, at first sight, this suspicion seems to be quite justified fitting, as it does, the Bernardine pattern of delay and digression. At the same time, this 'negative' view highlights the as yet unresolved presence of short cuts in Bernard's texts. To bring out more distinctly the simultaneity of the continuous flow of the discourse on the one hand, and the disruptive appearance of short cuts on the other, I borrow an image from Suger's meditation on the cross of

³ Here we touch upon a very delicate point. To which degree is Bernard's work an *opera aperta*? If Eco's notion of the *opera aperta* (Eco 1965) obtains, not only for the scholastic/thomistic texts but also for Bernard, the question arises as to the relationship between the 'open' level and the more contracted one. Is it possible at all for a work of art to be really open? Here the danger looms of an ever eluding *regressus ad infinitum*. For every reading of a text by definition 'closes' it. In my view an answer to that question can only be given by bringing out the performative aspects of Bernard's texts.

St. Eloy: the *gemmae*/jewels. It is jewelry and its glitter that can be used as a means of explaining the workings of *verba abbreviata* in Bernard's text while maintaining the latter's basic wildness.

I then move on to Bernard's account of the Christian feastdays. Applying the notion of gold and jewelry to the story of the Nativity, I try to trace Bernard's use of the dimensions of space and history as contracted in the *terra* of the monastery. Leaving the elaborate and randomly structured body of the Christmas sermons intact, those dimensions will take on the shape of the glitter of jewelry, the momentary presence of a *verbum abbreviatum* in the uninterrupted course of monastic preaching and celebration. Next, the other moments of Christ's life, the Passion, the Resurrection and the Ascension, will appear to be organised according to the same principle. In an ever increasing degree of intensity and contraction they will be presented as untouchable and evanescent moments of glitter in the sombre routine of the monk's penitential life.

CHAPTER SIX

GEMS AND GLITTER: SUGER OF ST. DENIS AND BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX ON ART

1. Respectability and philosophy: the case of Erwin Panofsky

In 1946 Erwin Panofsky published his *Abbey Church of St. Denis and its Art Treasures*. In his introduction to this edition of two works by Suger of St. Denis, *De administratione* and *De consecratione*, Panofsky was hardly able to conceal his *Entdeckersfreude*. Profoundly influenced by the Renaissance views on art himself he proved delighted with his discovery that Suger, though decidedly different from the great Renaissance patrons of art, could be seen as their precursor. Suger's many activities as a prince of the Church, as an abbot, as an architect and a surveyor of building activities, suggest the picture of an indefatigable lover of the arts whose humane qualities shine through whatever the limitations imposed on him by his ecclesiastical state and age.

In a century unusually productive of saints and heroes Suger excelled by being human...It has been said that Suger was harder to visualize as an individual than were the great cardinals of the seventeenth century of whom he was the historical ancestor. Yet it would seem that he steps out of the pages of history as surprisingly alive and surprisingly French: a fierce patriot and a good householder; a little rhetorical and much enamoured of grandeur, yet thoroughly matter-of-fact in practical affairs and temporal in his personal habits; hard-working and companionable, full of good nature and bon sens and irrepressibly vivacious.¹

Panofsky very well realises that the so-called Renaissance of the twelfth century should not be interpreted in terms of the Renaissance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Yet the temptation is

¹ Panofsky 1947: 37.

there and it is hard not to recognize in Panofsky's description of Suger the more or less humanistic ideals of the Renaissance concept of art which shaped modern art and art theory.

Another reason for Panofsky's enthusiasm is the rare fact that Suger has given a literary account of his artistic activities. In it he not only offers a detailed, matter-of-fact description of the abbey church of St. Denis and of its art treasures, but he also adds a theoretical justification of the use of art for sacred purposes. Making it possible for the art object to be commented upon within a philosophical referential framework, Suger, according to Panofsky, anticipates later, 'scientific' approaches to art.

Did he know, or sense, that his unreflecting enthusiasm for the Pseudo-Areopagite's and John the Scot's light metaphysics placed him in the van of an intellectual movement that was to result in the proto-scientific theories of Robert Grosseteste and Roger Bacon, on the one hand, and in a Christian Platonism ranging from William of Auvergne, Henry of Ghent and Ulric of Strassburg to Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, on the other?²

What then does this referential framework look like?

In his *De administratione* Suger describes at some length the process of the mind's contemplation of the art-object.

When we contemplate, out of sheer affection for the church our mother, these different ornaments both new and old; and when we behold how that wonderful cross of St. Eloy—together with the smaller ones—and that incomparable ornament commonly called "the Crest" are placed upon the golden altar, then I say, sighing deeply in my heart: Every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, the topaz, and the jasper, the chrysolite, and the onyx, and the beryl, the sapphire, and the carbuncle, and the emerald. To those who know the properties of precious stones it becomes evident, to their utter astonishment, that none is absent from the number of these (with the only exception of the carbuncle), but that they abound most copiously. Thus, when—out of my delight in the beauty of the house of God—the loveliness of the many-coloured gems has

² Panofsky 1972: 36

induced me to reflect, transferring that which is material to that which is immaterial, on the diversity of the sacred virtues: then it seems to me that I see myself dwelling, as it were, in some strange region of the universe which neither exists entirely in the slime of the earth nor entirely in the purity of Heaven; and that, by the grace of God, I can be transported from this inferior to that higher world in an anagogical manner. (*De administ.* c. 33)

The same idea is expressed by Suger in one of his poems describing the doors of the central west portal of the abbey church:

Whoever thou art, if thou seekest to extol the glory of these
doors.
Marvel not at the gold and the expense but at the craftsmanship
of the work.
Bright is the noble work; but, being nobly bright, the work
Should brighten the minds so that they may travel, through the
true lights,
To the True Light where Christ is the true door.
In what manner it be inherent in this world the golden door
defines:
The dull mind rises to truth through that which is material
And, in seeing this light, is resurrected from its former
submersion
(*De adminst.* c. 27)

Now, recent scholarship has shown Suger's thought to fit in with twelfth-century theology rather than originating directly in Pseudo-Dionysius and Johannes Scottus. The expressions *anagogicus mos* and *transfere*, for example, are to be found in Hugh and Richard of St. Victor.³ As a result, they have a more theological ring about them—Christ and the incarnation being the access to mental ascension rather than matter as such—than Panofsky's interpretation allows for. On the other hand, in the twelfth century the influence of a kind of Platonism, however it be defined, is admittedly all-pervasive. The school of Chartres is one of the finest

³ Zinn 1986a and Kidson 1987. Rorem accepts Kidson's criticism of Panofsky's 'exaggerated' view of Suger's familiarity with the Dionysian texts but thinks, that Kidson is, in turn, too radical (Rorem 1993: 81–3; 88–90).

examples of the diffuse presence of 'platonic' elements within a great variety of rhetorical settings, but not the only one. The Victorines themselves display a strong Dionysian touch. Hugh of St. Victor, for example, has written a commentary on Dionysius' *De hierarchia caelesti*. Setting the example for his great scholastic successors of the next century, he has been instrumental in preserving the Dionysian/Platonic element in a theology which was to come increasingly under the spell of Aristotle.

If Pseudo-Dionysius and John the Scot have exercised a certain influence on the High Middle Ages—a fact which is beyond doubt—, attention should be paid to the fragmentary nature of this influence. Rather than to a lack of knowledge this fragmentariness is due to the aforesaid variety of rhetorical models within which Dionysian/Eriugenian notions played a role. The cosmologies of William of Conches or Bernard Silvestris, for example, require a narrative setting which is different in outlook—and therefore different in the streamlining of ideas—from the mystical story of the Hugh of St. Victor's *De arca Noe mystica*.

But what about the 'all-pervasive' nature of Dionysian/Platonic thought? Here it is important to notice the difference between 'all-pervasive' and the idea of philosophical/historical identity. Underlying Panofsky's concept of Platonism—dating as it does from the Renaissance period—is a strong tendency to view its history as a maintenance of an idealism which is basically untouched by the different modes, in various degrees of idealistic and formalistic purity, in which it might have been expressed throughout the ages. However, not only is twelfth-century 'Platonism' an intrinsic part of different rhetorical models and moulded by their specific *fabulae*, but the systems of Pseudo-Dionysius and Johannes Scottus themselves are more than, and different from, a set of ideas, a philosophy limited to the consistent expression of pure forms and ideas. If there is any continuity in their intellectual survival, one should at least avoid limiting this continuity to ideas proper.

Dionysius' concept of reality, for example, is a 'romantic' one, subtly moving between articulation and ineffability and culminating in an evocation of 'mystical theology'. Johannes Scottus, for his part, patiently elaborates on his concept of *natura*, tracing its long trajectory all the way back to its divine origin.

Both authors, in applying the principle of negative and affirmative theology to the process of articulating divine reality, take the presence of that reality for granted, as is made crystal clear by the majestic opening of Scottus' *Periphyseon*:

Often as I ponder and investigate, to the best of my ability, with ever greater care the fact that the first and foremost division of all things that can either be perceived by the minds or transcend its grasp is into things that are and things that are not, a general name for all these things suggests itself which is *physis* in Greek or *natura* in Latin.⁴

Little though we know of the true content of this *natura*, it is proclaimed to be the basic description of reality embracing both being and non-being. As such the divine being is implied in this *natura* in one way or another. As a result, its presence to the 'thinking' mind (*mihi cogitanti*) cannot be undone. It is after all this ineluctable presence of being which enables the apophatic theology to perform its duty, i.e. to negate.

Essential to the Dionysian way of thinking is the fact that the itinerary of man's mind toward God does not follow a straight line. Right from the beginning, in its coming about/*aditus*, return/*reditus* is implied. Inside that process divine reality is to be found in different stages of visibility.

Consequently, there are more alarming aspects to Dionysian and Eriugenian thought than Suger's peaceful meditation on the gems,—or, for that matter, Panofsky's interpretation of it, allows for. Suger's evocation of the glitter of divine presence does not just cause the mind to be elevated one-dimensionally from a material to a spiritual level. Every step the mind takes simultaneously undercuts its own progression. In a sense it 'moves progressively backwards'. Going forwards and backwards and holding *aditus* and *reditus* together, it tantalizingly intensifies its own efforts to make sense of reality. From the viewpoint of the divine this process is to be seen as illumination from above: light which flows from the *Pater luminum, ad verum lumen, ubi Christus janua vera*. The fact, however, that both illumination and the striving upward of the created mind are part of one and the same process contributes to the

⁴ Otten 1991: 221.

latter's dynamic nature. Appreciating a material object like the cross of St. Eloy for the reference it makes to a more spiritual world appears to be too simple a procedure to justify the claim that Suger's ideas more or less foreshadow the pre-scientific revolution of late-medieval and Renaissance Neoplatonism. In fact Panofsky seems to be concerned to lend Suger's views on art a kind of 'philosophical' respectability they do not possess and, indeed, do not need. By 'philosophical' and 'respectability' I mean to denote the tendency in Panofsky to appreciate Suger's proto-scientific, artistic qualities as almost abstract from, and moving out of, the realm of religion, to value those humanistic-artistic qualities almost as a victory of human imagination over the 'materialistic' and primitive realm of religion. However, the coherence and consistency within the works of art and writing thus offered by a 'Platonic' framework would run counter to the unfinished, rough nature of twelfth-century culture. Rather than coinciding with a coherent set of ideas this culture is conspicuous by the rudimentary and mosaic nature of its art and learning.

Besides, a philosophical case can be made against Panofsky's rapprochement of Suger and Dionysius/Scottus. 'Material' in the Dionysian sense cannot be identified with the accidental status of an art object. It is too much lacking in *Dinglichkeit* for that. Matter for Dionysius, or, for that matter, for any Platonic thinker, is too much part of a closely knit argument which is going on, and moving around, in search of realisation of being.

Admittedly, it was respectability which played an important role in Suger's life: respectability with regard to the position and dignity of the Church, respectability in political life, respectability with regard to the material and political importance of the abbey of St. Denis. This respectability, however, is not based on a 'philosophy' as a complete referential system, on an organisation of signs and symbols, on a spiritual concept of culture governing the world of matter. If Neoplatonic at all, Suger's thought, like all 'Platonic' ideas in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, is of a much more fragmentary nature and as such subject to endless variations. The so called Neoplatonism of Anselm of Canterbury, for example—the preeminence of ideal existence, the ontological proof of the existence of God—does not make much sense as long as the existence of ideas is not broken down and transformed in the

dramatic story of sin and redemption. And even the seemingly more direct Neoplatonism of the School of Chartres comes to life only if situated within the context of a *fabula*.

In Suger's case it is the concreteness of the art object, be it the cross of St. Eloy or the church of St. Denis, which is so overwhelmingly present. Watching him meditate on the gems on the cross and transcend from the material to the spiritual, this very concreteness remains and is even intensified. Whatever the differences between Suger and Dionysius and Scottus may be, they share this intensity and concreteness. As has been demonstrated, neither Dionysius nor Scottus pretended to offer a complete referential system in the philosophical sense of the word. Their point of departure was an immensely strong and almost 'material' presence of the divine, either in the form of the 'epekeina toon holoon' of Dionysius' *Mystica theologia* or as implied in Scottus' concept of *natura*. For them that very presence was the driving force behind the dynamics of being and knowledge. As far as Suger is concerned, the concreteness of his *gemma*—and for that matter of his church and of church-related matters—reminds one of that divine presence. What in much (Christian) Neoplatonism became the end of the journey culminating in a mystical experience, in Suger's case presents itself right from the beginning in an almost crude, material manner. Yet the material presence of the art object is reminiscent in one way or another of the ineluctable presence of Scottus' *natura*, just as the contemplative mind in the Dionysian/Eriugenian itinerary of *aditus* and *reditus* is as much substantially part of reality—even the reality it is striving for—as it is fragile and invisible. This very combination of materiality and fragility shows through in Suger's *gemma*. No complete and well organised referential system is contained in this little gem. It rather invites the onlooking mind to meditate—and that is what *anagogicus mos* is about. Consequently, amidst his precious stones, leaving the art object as crude as it is, Suger feels at liberty to organize his mind so as to perform an act of visual contemplation, just as he acted the part of replacing the king while keeping dressed in the habit of an abbot, and just as, in a more general sense, he celebrated life as a continuous act of liturgical performance on a grand scale.

2. *Wildness and precision*

Much has been made of the controversy about art between Suger and Bernard. On the one hand, there is Bernard's firm disapproval of the state of monastic affairs in St. Denis, including its artistic splendour, which he rejected as being 'the workshop of Vulcan'. On the other hand, we should take into account the fact that after the introduction of moderate reforms in St. Denis, which, incidentally, not basically interfere with Suger's artistic aspirations, little or nothing was heard any longer from Bernard. Panofsky, for his part, holds the view that for Suger the discussion was far from over. His writings on the subject should be considered a reaction to Bernard's rigorous asceticism and puritanism. As for the nature of that puritanism Panofsky is rather subtle. Unlike others he does not take Bernard's view at face value. Admittedly, he refers to Bernard's biographer with regard to the latter's alleged blindness to all forms of art:

St. Bernard's contemporary eulogists assure us—and his modern biographers seem to agree—that he was simply blind to the visible world and its beauty. He is said to have spent a whole year in the noviciate of Cîteaux without noticing whether the ceiling of the dormitory was flat or vaulted and whether the chapel received its light from one window or from three; and we are told that he rode a whole day on the shores of the Lake of Geneva without casting a single glance upon the scenery.⁵

However, referring to Bernard's famous description of the cloister of Cluny (monsters, monkeys, lions, centaurs), Panofsky rightly observes that it was not 'a blind and insensitive man' who was capable of such sharp observation:

St. Bernard disapproved of art, not because he did not feel its charms but because he felt them too keenly not to consider them dangerous. He banished art, like Plato (only that Plato did it "regretfully"), because it belonged on the wrong side of a world that he could see only as an unending revolt of the

⁵ Panofsky 1979: 25; Cf. Feld 1990: 51 en de *Vita prima* II, 5, 28–31, PL 185: 284.

temporal against the eternal, of human reason against faith, of the senses against the spirit. Suger had the good fortune to discover, in the very words of the thrice blessed Saint Denis, a Christian philosophy that permitted him to greet material beauty as a vehicle of spiritual beatitude instead of forcing him to flee from it as though from a temptation; and to conceive of the moral as well as the physical universe, not as a monochrome in black and white but as a harmony of many colours.⁶

Once more the respectability factor shows through. In spite of Panofsky's subtle, psychological approach toward Bernard, which keeps the latter's artistic potential more or less open, there is a philosophical *a priori* which separates Bernard's position from that of Suger. But by opposing, as Panofsky does, Suger's successful attempt to use philosophy in order to 'greet material beauty as a vehicle of spiritual beatitude' to Bernard's rejection of that philosophy as 'a revolt of the temporal against the eternal, human reason against faith, senses against the spirit', he ultimately reduces the eternal faith and spirit to a kind of shapeless substance, to 'blind obedience and utter self-denial'.⁷ As for Bernard, in the absence of a philosophical framework all that is left for his attitude toward art to be based upon seems to be an unarticulated realm of faith.

Taken literally, the way Panofsky opposes Bernard to Suger would seem to presuppose Suger's program of beauty and art to be capable of doing without the intrinsic presence of 'eternal faith and spirit'. To all intents and purposes that would, of course, run counter, not only to Suger's ambitions but also to the thought of the two acclaimed 'philosophers' Pseudo-Dionysius and Scottus. As I have pointed out, Christian Neoplatonism is about the eternal entering the temporal as much as about the temporal entering the eternal. In that process faith does not run parallel to the eternal or the spiritual exclusively. It should be stated once more that there is no well defined referential system, no philosophy which governs the relationship between those different elements. This applies to Dionysius, Scottus and Suger as well as to Bernard. Whatever the differences between them, their intellectual and artistic movements

⁶ Panofsky 1972: 26.

⁷ Panofsky 1972: 12.

do not follow a straight pattern. Sharing so negative a quality might seem arbitrary and unimportant. From a historical point of view, however, such arbitrariness is a *conditio sine qua non* for reaching an adequate assessment of the place of those authors in the history of ideas.

If then Suger and Bernard turn out not to be diametrically opposed to one another, the question arises as to the nature of their common cause. If faith is not out of reach for reason, spirit for matter, the eternal for the temporal, what does their relationship look like?

As far as Suger is concerned, his position has been outlined above. Although it is difficult to be precise with regard to the problem of the relationship between the art-business he was in charge of and his theoretical reflections, his writings give a fair impression of his views. But what about Bernard? If his austerity in matters of art is part of the parcel, how is it to be articulated?

In order to shed more light on this problem let us turn first to the question whether or not a connection exists between the famous Cistercian/Bernardine architectural austerity and his writing. In a sense the high quality of Bernard's eloquence has always been taken for granted. And although the epitheton *mellifluus*/honey-sweet derives its meaning from Bernard's mystical activities rather than from the sweetness of his language, the brilliance of his eloquence has been part of his fame. Yet in a more technical sense it is not Bernard's style which has earned him this reputation. On the contrary. Bernard's seventeenth-century eulogists such as Bossuet and Fénelon, while praising his ecclesiastico-political achievements, passed over his literary qualities in silence. Two centuries later Vacandard, referring to a book on Bourdalou and his time, i.e. the period of Bossuet and Fénelon, once more summarized the 'classicist' reservations with regard to Bernard's style:

Ce n'est donc pas l'originalité qui manque à l'abbé de Clairvaux. Le seul reproche grave qui atteigne son style, c'est qu'il n'est pas toujours conforme à la bonne tradition littéraire. Bernard vivait dans un siècle où le goût ne dominait ni en littérature ni dans les arts. Certes, il en eut le sentiment, même assez vive; une de ses lettres en fait foi (Ep. 89). Mais il était assez disposé à dédaigner ce que nous appelons la forme ou le style. Ils sont rares, les siècles où le génie se sent protégé, par

tout ce qui l'entoure, contre les écarts de son intelligence ou, si l'on veut, de son imagination. C'est dans l'histoire d'un peuple ou d'une langue l'époque généralement trop courte de la maturité du goût. Or, dit justement un critique, "c'est le goût qui marque l'invisible limite où l'art dégénère et s'écarte des lois qui le protègent; c'est lui qui règle et tempère les esprits les plus ingénieux et ne leur permet pas de confondre la pénétration avec le raffinement, ni la profondeur avec la subtilité". Bernard n'a pas échappé à ce peril. (Vacandard 1927: I 475)⁸

It is not only the seventeenth-century, classicist reproach made to Bernard's style for its lack of moderation which is echoed here. In Chapter Five we saw that a pupil of Abelard, by the name of Berengar, for one, had voiced serious objections to Bernard's style. Far from being impressed by Bernard's 'spontaneous and authentic' outburst into tears over the death of his brother Gerard, he is quite unwilling to appreciate this change in literary mood. In his view Bernard had sinned against the elementary rules of the literary game, mixing up different genres of love and wedding songs on the one hand, and lament and mourning on the other. He thus displays a tendency towards the chaotic, the unorganised.

As has been pointed out in Chapter Five, Berengar's learned reference to Horace as an illustration of Bernard's lack of stylistic taste does not fail subtly to remind the reader of the latter's ferocious attack on Cluny. The monstrous and chaotic outlook of the

⁸ 'There is, therefore, no lack of originality in the abbot of Clairvaux. However, one serious criticism that can be made with regard to his style is that it is not always in accordance with the standards of literary tradition. Bernard's was an age in which taste was neither predominant in literature nor in the arts. And he undoubtedly felt this, more or less acutely, as one of his letters (Ep. 89) proves. But he was rather inclined to be neglectful of what we would call form or style. Rare are the periods in which the genius feels itself protected by its surroundings as against the destructive influence of its intellect, or, if one so wishes, of its imagination. Generally speaking, in the history of a people or of a language, such periods of mature taste last too briefly. One critic said, however: "it is taste that marks the invisible borderline where art degenerates and does away with the laws by which it is protected. It is taste that governs and tempers the most ingenious minds, refusing to allow them to mix up penetration and refinement, profundity and subtlety." Bernard has not succeeded in avoiding this risk.'

cloister of Cluny turns out to underlie the very structure of Bernard's own language. There is no doubt that Berengar here uses the occasion to settle the score for Bernard's efforts to banish his master Abelard from the respectable order and art of religious reasoning. Bernard is repaid in kind: Berengar banishes his opponent from the realm of rhetorical professionalism. Thus he paved the way for the later classicist habit of passing by the embarrassing wildness of Bernard's style and thereby of ignoring its qualities.

Whatever the merits, or faults, of the classicist reproach against Bernard's style for its lack of moderation, the very nature of the latter's underlying ascetic austerity does not seem to have drawn much attention from its critics. What counted for people like Bossuet was, as we have seen, the miraculous combination in Bernard of sanctity and political skills. As a result, the *Vita prima* figures more prominently in Bossuet's *éloge* than Bernard's own writings. However, in leaving unexplained the relationship between asceticism on the one hand, and the abundance of Bernard's style on the other, the classicist tradition more or less assumed Bernard's literary expression of his austerity to be beyond its control. One is reminded of Panofsky's description of Bernard's attitude towards art: blind obedience and utter self-denial excluding any appreciation whatever of human creativity and form. From a 'humanistic' point of view, ascetic faith (as opposed to a more 'civilised' expression of religion), though representing the eternal versus the temporal, is too much mixed up with the unarticulate realm of human emotion to be the object of critical literary scrutiny.

Now there is yet another complication. Ever since Etienne Gilson commented on the contrast between the unadorned walls (*murs nus*) of Bernard's monasteries and the abundant nature of his literary style—no *puritanisme littéraire* as far as Bernard is concerned—,⁹ it has been taken for granted that this gap was in no need of being bridged. Gilson, for his part, suspected behind this literary abundance the smouldering fire of a humanistic love for the written word. However, in his interpretation proper of Bernard he pays no attention to this aspect. Instead, he reformulates Bernard's thought, by means of his own powerful argumentation, as a well-organised

⁹ Cf. Gilson 1947: 81–2.

set of ideas. As a result, Bernard's thought turns out to contain a respectable philosophical theology. Up till the present day no serious attempt has been made to break through the defense of Gilson's 'philosophical' reconstruction and to assess Bernard's work in the context of both argumentation and artistic expression.

One aspect of this cluster has not escaped attention. With regard to Bernard's style work of seminal importance has been done by Christine Mohrmann. In the Introduction to volume II of the *Sancti Bernardi opera* she discusses the 'looseness' of Bernard's language tracing it back to the Church Fathers, Augustine in particular: the paratactic style *per kola et commata*, the *style antithétique et figuré*.

Ainsi, loin d'être une concession au prestige de l'art littéraire, loin de refléter un humanisme mal assimilé, le style de saint Bernard s'insère normalement dans une évolution typiquement chrétienne de la littérature.¹⁰

As for the objection that the richness of this style might contradict the simplicity and severity of the Christian Gospel, Mohrmann refers to the arguments Augustine had given in favour of the use of this 'style touffu, coupé, orné': its simple and elementary structure enabled it to please both the illiterate and the literate. Not unlike the general outlook of Neoplatonism it was of a universal nature, echoing the structure of the cosmos itself. Further, it was reminiscent of the biblical style, in particular the *paralellismus membrorum*. For those reasons the use of this 'Asiatic' style appeared to be appropriate in sermons, and pastoral literature in general. Moreover, it proved to be a suitable vehicle for conveying the emotions of mystical experience.

Bernard, for his part, is, according to Mohrmann, to be considered a perfect example of this genre. Although the *exubérance bourguignonne* shines through in his writings, his style is far from being undisciplined:

Sous la surface des mots apparaissent un principe d'ordre, une structure sévère et rigoureuse, qui rappellent l'architecture qui

¹⁰ SBOP II: xii.

suscita le mouvement cistercien, et dont la *compositio*, la distribution harmonieuse, équilibrée, de toutes les parties, est un élément essentiel.¹¹

What more is there to be said about Suger's and Bernard's common cause? How is their relationship to be described if 'blind obedience', 'faith', 'asceticism' are supposed not to exclude Suger's love of art and splendour? Generally speaking, both Bernard and Suger can be said to share, in different degrees of visibility, the universal validity of ideas, 'certaines conceptions néoplatoniciennes', which underlay their artistic effectiveness. In other words, their common cause consists of the availability of rough segments of language (biblical, patristic etc.) and material from the arts (designs, rhetorical and artistic structures etc.) the combination of which may serve any

¹¹ Mohrmann 1957 in SBOP II: xii. Duby seems to hold a different view. Comparing Bernard's literary qualities with Cistercian architecture he remarks: 'Sa conception baroque de l'expression verbale est à l'opposé de la conception qu'il impose de l'oeuvre d'art'. However, Duby also tries to explain Bernard's simple taste in matters of art by pointing to the underlying notion of interiorisation and to the primacy of the word (Duby 1976b: 94, 139). Both Duby's book on Bernard and Cistercian art and his *Le temps des cathédrales* can be seen as an attempt to make Bernard part of the grand Dionysian design—'Dieu est lumière'—which in his view dominates twelfth-century culture (Duby 1976a: 121–55, Duby 1976b).

It is to be regretted that Bernard's literary qualities are almost passed over in silence in the section 'Literature' of the splendid survey of twelfth-century culture *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century* (Benson and Constable 1982). Janet Martin, in her article 'Classicism and Style in Latin Literature' (537–68), does refer to Mohrmann's work when making the following point (563–4): 'In the latter half of the twelfth century, classicizing prose style recedes in importance relative to other stylistic tendencies. The traditional elevated style with its parallelism, sound-figures, and rich biblical imagery found remarkable success, notably in the works of one of the outstanding stylists of the Middle Ages, Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153). Admittedly, this style is different from the classicizing prose with its "avoidance of the parallelism of structure and sound characteristic of sermons and related genres"' (563). Of course, one should not try to force Bernard into a classicist framework. But one implication of Mohrmann's remark which ought not to be overlooked is that below the surface of exuberant language an austerity can be found which places Bernard firmly in the company of other eleventh- and twelfth-century authors such as Hildebert of Laverdin who were as versatile in 'classical' composition as in the writing of more 'biblical' and 'sound'-orientated prose and poetry.

'purpose except the establishment of a pre-fabricated system or philosophy.

As far as Suger is concerned, there is art—buildings, stones, decoration, jewelry—and language. Both his language and his art are intertwined. Reciprocity is in the air. Consequently, meditating on the art-object, for example the cross of St. Eloy, and elevating his mind to the spiritual level, Suger does not really move out of the materiality of that object. The spiritual dimension he discovers in the material object turns out—platonically—to have been there all along. All Suger's meditation on the *gemma* does, is to bring it momentarily alive by means of a procedure which does not basically differ from the rhetorical process of *docere*, *flectere* and *movere*.

Bernard, on the other hand, uses the same material as Suger to express the ideals of monastic existence: stone, buildings, and segments of language. There is one fundamental difference, however. Whereas Suger is content simply to bring out the spiritual dimension of his *gemma*, Bernard's attitude toward the status of the art-object is more critical, and more complex. Within a rather loose framework, Suger's art-objects offer opportunities of enjoyment to the beholding eye according to the different degrees of materialisation or, for that matter, of spiritualisation. The gem on the cross of St. Eloy may be admired for its physical splendour as well as for being the reflection of divine light.

Bernard's is a much more organised concept of matter. For him matter is spiritual right from the beginning, displaying 'un principe d'ordre, une structure sévère et rigoureuse'. As such it does not allow for the follies of human imagination. What exactly does 'spiritual' mean in this context? Instead of coming into being on its way from matter to meaning as for Suger, the 'spiritual' for Bernard coincides with the austerity of matter, for example with the architectural design of his monastery. Consequently, his appreciation of art as illustration and decoration (for instance, through images and sculptures) boils down to tolerating it in other, less spiritual circumstances than inside the monastery and ridiculing the monastic simpletons who ought to be spiritual by profession but who do not manage to resist the temptation of visual splendour. That is the

reason why, as we have seen, Bernard basically addresses the Cluniacs as colleagues when he scorns them for their artistic exuberance.

However, as a monk, I put to monks the same question that a pagan used to criticize other pagans: "Tell me, priests", he said, "what is the gold doing in the holy place?" I, however, say, "Tell me, poor men"—for I am not concerned with the verse, but with the sense—I say, "Tell me, poor men, if indeed you are poor men, what is gold doing in the holy place?" For certainly bishops have one kind of business, and monks another. We know that since they are responsible for both the wise and the foolish, they stimulate the devotion of a carnal people with material ornaments because they cannot do so with spiritual ones. But we who have withdrawn from the people, we who have left behind all that is precious and beautiful in this world for the sake of Christ, we who regard as dung all things shining in beauty, soothing in sound, agreeable in fragrance, sweet in taste, pleasant in touch, in short, all material pleasures—in order that we may win Christ, whose devotion, I ask, do we strive to excite in all this? (Apo XII 28; transl. Rudolph 1990a: 104–5)

Of course, it is fair to say that all Bernard does here is to criticize the excesses as he found them in Cluny rather than going all out against the acceptability of art as such.¹² Yet serious problems do remain. It is not enough just to take Bernard's charge at face value. It is the intrinsically spiritual aspect of his art as expressed in matter and language which has to be accounted for. In contrast to Panofsky's Suger there is no free traffic between the art-object and its meaning to the contemplating mind. Bernard's spiritual concept of art supposes the art-object to be equally meaningful all along. Paradoxically, this reduction of meaning to the art-object itself, rather than limiting the latter to one single, fixed position of reference, widens its scope considerably. It is this paradox of the abundance of meaningfulness resulting from the aestheticism of spiritual austerity—in art and, if, metaphorically speaking, we take rough language as a kind of matter, in speech—which I want to

¹² Rudolph 1990a and Rudolph 1990b.

discuss in what follows. Describing the concentrated form of Bernard's *materia spiritualis* is by no means an easy task. Let us imagine ourselves once more, as in the Introduction to this book, in front of the abbey of Fontenay in Burgundy which is contemporary with Clairvaux and built according to the latter's plan, or facing the austere lines of Le Thoronet in Provence. All we observe is matter: stone, reduced to the most barren shape of undecorated form: a geometrical composition, abstract art. There is nothing in between those lines and the eye of the beholder which fills in the latter's imagination with regard to the story told by the art-object. There is no image or decoration along the lines of Suger's cross of St. Eloy which would stimulate the mind in a symbolic, referential way to elevate itself to spiritual heights. Yet the crude stones and austere lines of this building complex contain a splendour as intense as Suger's *gemma*. Trying to understand Bernard's position, we might speculate and guess that for Bernard the effect of Suger's gem—or, at least of Panofsky's Suger—on the contemplating mind might be to obstruct it in its freedom of movement. On its way from matter to spirit the mind would have to stick to a referential framework, such as an iconological program for instance, which would do no justice to the 'Spirit which vivifies'. The gem on the cross, once it has done its duty and run its course by meaning what it was supposed to mean, would not seem to be of use any more. Put in Dionysian terms, such a fixed program would not allow the mind to return from spirit to matter. As for Bernard, return is where it all begins: *Revertere, Sunamite, revertere*.¹³

If we turn to Bernard's style, the question remains how the austerity of architectural form is to be related to the abundance of his language. Can, or should, this style be reduced to mathematical austerity? If not, what sense can be made of it, or should it be assigned to the realm of chaos and disorder? Is there a link between art and architecture and Bernard's literary expression, or is the latter to be left to the unarticulated area of blind obedience and faith? Splendour there certainly is, as well as abundance. There is, in my view, every reason to dwell on Bernard's inquisitorial question to Cluny: '*Dicite*', *inquam*, '*pauperes, si pauperes, in sancto quid fecit*

¹³ See Chapter Nine, 1: '*Return*' she says: *the mystery of change*.

aurum?¹⁴ Rather than about the acceptability of art and splendour *tout court* the argument between Suger and Bernard is about the quality of art. Bernard and his fellow-monks have left the world and its glitter, but not in order to give up wealth and treasures altogether. Aridity, however much required for Cistercian survival, is not the one-dimensional pass-word to a better life. The spiritual gold-rush—of a better quality, one would hope, than the non-professional, worldly/religious pursuit of wealth—is to be continued within monastic bounds. It is my contention that Bernard's prose, reflecting the austerity of architectural form, contains a lot of *aurum*: gems which, though subtly hidden in seemingly unorganized language, hold together both the wildness and aridity of the Cistercian desert.

¹⁴ It should be stated that there is no external evidence for the assumption that there is a direct link between Cistercian art and Bernardine prose. What is more, such a rapprochement is in principle as much open to criticism as Panofsky's 'philosophical' interpretation of Suger's art or Duby's easy associations with regard to light metaphysics and art, unless it can be demonstrated, as I intend to do, that there is a geometrical simplicity underlying Bernard's prose which, strictly speaking, in order to be discovered as such, does not need the barren walls (*les murs nus*) of the Cistercian monasteries. On the other hand, it seems to me too simplistic to conclude, as Helmut Feld does, from Bernard's hagiographical blindness to art and from the absence of information regarding Bernard's involvement in building-activities that there is no relationship between the two whatsoever. See Feld 1990: 46–62.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE GEMS OF CHRISTMAS: THE SERMONS ON THE NATIVITY AND ABSTRACT ART

1. Introduction

In this chapter I propose to use the image of *gemmae*/jewelry as a literary device to interpret the text of Bernard's Sermons on the Nativity. First I shall examine Bernard's image production regarding one of the major events in the Christian calendar: Christmas. The next step will be to watch Bernard structure this event by taking away its (over-)familiar outlook and infusing it with other sets of images. The abundance of scenes and images resulting from this procedure is, in turn, so I argue, ruled by small, atomic principles: *verba abbreviata*/'abbreviated words', which operate as little *gemmae*/jewels hidden in the text. In that process familiar images such as the Nativity will be confronted with unfamiliar ones. At the same time they will be reduced to minimal size. Put into the terminology used in the Introduction to this book, this chapter should be considered an effort to lay bare the intrinsically geometrical nature of the monastic complex. Just as the monastic environment is marked by an interplay of form and abundant vegetation, so the Bernardine use of images such as the Nativity is encompassed and stylised by simple, literary lines and circles. It goes without saying that the visibility of images would seem to suffer under the pressure of underlying abstract forms. Yet in the end, rather than losing their shape—being 'disfigured'—they will reappear, smaller but more articulate.

In view of the complicated and inevitably abstract nature of this approach the analysis proper will be preceded by a translation of the texts under consideration, the first and third sermon on the Nativity. Familiarity with the text will make its easier to find our way around

in this 'monastic memory reservoir' consisting of biblical texts, scenes and stories Bernard is directly or indirectly referring to and which contribute to the subtle texture of the sermons.

2. *The text: Sermones in nativitate domini*

Translated by PETER CRAMER

IN NATIVITATE DOMINI SERMO PRIMUS

About the five fountains

1. A great thing, beloved, today's solemnity, the birth of the Lord. Short though. And a short sermon for a short day. Small wonder we make a short word when we see the shortening God the Father got up to. How long a word it was, how short he got it, you may like to know. HEAVEN, says this Word, AND EARTH, I FILL. Made flesh, it is crammed in a narrow crib. FROM AGE, says the prophet, AND TO AGE THOU ART GOD. And then what? We get a child a day old. What was this about, brethren, why was it he emptied himself like this, humbled himself and shortened himself like this, the Lord of Greatness, if it wasn't because you've got to do the same thing yourselves? He broadcasts now by example what he will preach afterwards in words: LEARN OF ME, BECAUSE I AM MEEK AND HUMBLE OF HEART, and this so that he is seen to speak the truth who says: AND THIS JESUS BEGAN TO DO AND TO TEACH. I beg you and ask you in all earnestness, brethren, do not sit by as this example, so precious, is shown to you, but form yourselves on it, and you will be made new in the spirit of your heart. Look to your humility, which is virtues' ground and guardian. Stick with it. It alone can save your souls. What's more paltry, or abhorrent, to be punished more harshly, than after seeing God of Heaven made a child, man should go thinking he can wind himself above the earth? The intolerable impudence of it. The Great God empties himself, and there goes the worm strutting and swollen.

2. So this is why he emptied himself, and took the form of a servant, who in the form of God was the Father's equal. But he

emptied himself of Majesty and Power, not of Goodness and Mercy. What does the apostle say, after all? **THEN THE GOODNESS AND THE KINDNESS OF GOD OUR SAVIOUR, DAWNED ON US, HIS LOVE FOR MAN.** Earlier, in the creation of things, Power had made an appearance, then in the governance of things, it was Wisdom's turn to come on. Merciful kindness, though, that really only did its turn with humanity. Power was communicated to the Jews with signs and portents, and this is why you can hear **I THE LORD, I THE LORD** ringing down the Law. The philosophers, their faculties spilling over, got wind of Majesty, or so the Apostle says: **THAT WHICH IS KNOWN OF GOD IS MANIFEST IN THEM.** If the Jews were pressed by Power, these Majesty-watchers were quite cowed by glory. Power means subjection, Majesty means wonder, neither calls for imitation. Let Goodness make its entry, Lord, and on it, man, created in your image, can form himself. For we cannot imitate Majesty, Power, Wisdom, and it doesn't do to vye with them. Since when has mercy cooped itself up with the angels, while justice stalks abroad—by which I mean among all human kind? **LORD, THY MERCY IS UP IN HEAVEN, AND THY TRUTH TOUCHES THE CLOUDS,** so the saying goes, and down goes all the earth to oblivion, and the powers of the air. Let your mercy broaden its borders, cast wider its nets, unstiffen its nursing folds, let its touch stretch from here to there, one end to the other, and put each thing in its sweet place. Your lap is creased in judgement. Unfasten your belt, and let your pity flow and your love burst.

3. You are afraid, Man? But what of? You shrink and shake before the face of God because He is near? Why? He comes not to judge, but to save the world. Once you allowed yourself to be persuaded by a certain faithless servant to sneak off with the crown that belonged kings and put it on your own head. You were caught in the act. Why shouldn't you be afraid? Why shouldn't you run from his face? The sword of fire was perhaps already there, quivering. You were put in exile. **IN THE SWEAT OF THY FACE THOU SHALT EAT THY BREAD.** Then a voice was heard in the land. The Lord was on his way. Where will you go to hide from his spirit? Where will you find refuge from his face? There's only one answer. Stop running. Don't be afraid. He is not carrying a weapon.

He is looking about for someone to save, not punish. You're still going to say: I HEARD THY VOICE AND I HID MYSELF AWAY. And to stop you saying it—this is the thing—he comes a child. He doesn't even have a voice. Or if he's got a voice, it's the whine of a child, a thing to be pitied, not to shiver at. Terrible for someone to hear, perhaps, not for you. He was made a child, the Virgin Mother binds him in swaddling, and still you shake for fear? Or have you got it—he comes not to lose you, but to save you, and to snatch you up, not to bind you? He will begin his fight against your enemies, and now the wise strong God brings down his heel on the braggart's neck.

4. Two enemies you have, sin and death, which is to say: body-death, and soul-death. He comes to fight the two of them, and from both he will save you. Fear not. Already he conquered sin in his own person, when he took on human nature but not the contagion of human nature. With sin, a great violence was done, and sin is blasted away, which is what we see when we see how nature is found, in Christ, to have become alien throughout from sin, once it has been stormed and occupied in an action which he himself rejoices in for its glory. From then, he persecutes your enemies, grips them in his fist, turning away only with their withering. The back-and-forth of his days is a wrestling. He fights with words, and he fights with examples. But then, in his passion, he straps sin down, binds the strong man, and smashes his vases in bits. And now in this same sequence of events, he goes so far as to overcome death. He does it, first in himself, when he rises up, first-fruit of sleepers and first-born of the dead. Then he'll go on to fight the fight again with death, in all of us this time, when clear as light, he will wake our death-wrapped bodies, and enemy-death is beaten once more. This is why, rising, he has covered himself with beauty. He is not, as he was before he was born, wrapped in swaddling cloths. This is why he who began in mercy's loose-draped folds, passing judgement on noone, when he rose, buckled himself tight, and is to be seen collecting up those affluent folds of mercy beneath a belt. From this moment he is got ready for the judging there will be at the moment of our resurrection. This is why he came before as a child, to put forward mercy, and so temper beforehand with mercy the judging there will be at the end.

5. A little one has come to us, but it's no small thing he brings. He brings no trinkets for us. If you ask what he has brought, the great thing he has brought is the mercy, with which, the Apostle has it, he has made us safe. And this wasn't a good that stopped with the people he happened to find when he was about. He is a fountain not to be drunk dry. A fountain for us is the Lord Christ, and we can wash ourselves in him, as it is written: **WHO HATH LOVED US, AND WASHED US FROM OUR SINS.** That's not the only thing water's good for though. It washes away blots, but then, it puts out thirst. **HOLY THE MAN,** goes Wisdom, **WHO STOPS WITH WISDOM AND MEDITATES IN JUSTICE,** and a bit later Wisdom goes on: **AND SHE SHALL GIVE HIM THE WATER OF THE WISDOM THAT SAVES FOR HIS DRINK.** Wisdom that saves. So it is. Wisdom is death to the flesh, and the wisdom of the world is God's enemy. Only the Wisdom which is from God is wisdom that makes safe, and on the definition of the good James, it is first shamefast, and then peaceable. For the wisdom of the flesh is soaked in desire, no shame in it at all. And the wisdom of the world is a ruinous storm, nothing to do with peace. The Wisdom which is from God though, to begin with is modest, not seeking its own, but what is Jesus Christ's, so that a man will not seek his own will, but makes a consideration of what might be the will of God; and then it is pacific Wisdom, not abounding in its own sense of things, but, instead, acquiescing in a counsel, a judgement, that comes from somewhere else.

6. Water is used in a third way, for irrigation, and obviously this is something new plantations need very greatly. If they don't get it, either they don't get on, or they fade away completely for dryness. So, whoever has sown the seeds of good works, will seek the waters of devotion, and the garden of good conversation, watered from the well of grace, will not run dry. It will grow from green strength to green strength. The prophet prays for the same kind of thing: **MAY THY BURNT OFFERING BE MADE FAT.** So it was that as Aaron praised the Law, each day a fire would burn up his sacrifice. What are we to make of all this if it isn't that good works are seasoned with the spice of devotion and the sweetness of spiritual grace? Are we or are we not now going to be able to find the fourth fountain, get back our paradise, a paradise grown green and pleasant with the

waters of four wells? One thing's for sure, if we don't hope to be given back paradise here on earth, it's not going to do much good hoping for a kingdom in the heavens above. IF I HAVE SPOKEN TO YOU EARTHLY THINGS, he says, AND YOU BELIEVETH NOT, WILL YOU BELIEVE, IF I SHALL SPEAK HEAVENLY THINGS? But now, because we fasten on the expectation of things to come when things are shown us in the present, we have a far better paradise, more delightful by far, than had our first parents, and our paradise is the Lord Christ. In which, we have found three wells, and here we are looking for a fourth. We've got the waters of remission, from the well of mercy, and they wash blame. We've got the waters of discretion, from the well of Wisdom, and they quench our thirst. We've got the waters of devotion, from the well of grace, and they water the plants of good works. And what we're looking for is the waters of emulation. They are the waters that boil and cook the food. They season and they cook our affections. Up they bubble from season and they cook our affections. Up they bubble from charity's well. Which prompts this from the prophet: MY HEART GREW HOT WITHIN ME, AND IN MY MEDITATION FIRE SHALL FLAME OUT. In another place: THE ZEAL OF THY HOUSE HATH EATEN ME UP. From a devotion that is sweet the justice lover loves justice, but when it comes to his loathing for what is not just, this is from the boiling pot of emulation. Isaiah, didn't he predict something on these fountains? YOU SHALL DRINK WATERS WITH JOY OUT OF THE SAVIOUR. That promise has to do with this life not the next. To be sure of it, listen to what comes next: ON THAT DAY, YOU ARE TO SAY: CONFESS THE LORD AND CALL ON HIS NAME. Calling on has to do with present time, as it is written, CALL UPON ME IN THE DAY OF TROUBLE.

7. Of the four wells, three tally with the three orders of the church, each with one of the three. The first is common to all. In many things we all offend, and we have need of a well of mercy, to be able to wash out the blots of those offences. We have all sinned, I say, and all fall short of the glory of God. Prelate, monk, or wed, if we say we have not sinned, we seduce ourselves. None is without blot, and the well of mercy is necessary for all. Noah, Daniel, and Job must hurry with the same prayer to this well. As to the others,

Job looks more for the well of wisdom, since it is he who walks among the snares, and so it strikes us as something great when he turns himself from evil. For Daniel, there is running to the well of grace. With Daniel, the thing is to fatten up with the grace of devotion what has been worn down at the wheel of penitence, and wearied by the labour of withdrawal. After all, we are told to do things with joy: **GOD LOVETH A CHEERFUL GIVER**. But this land is far from being rich in such seed: the seed of good conversation. It perishes in no time, wastes away in no time, if it's not brought on with frequent waterings—and so it's quite right that in the Lord's Prayer we ask for this kind of grace under the name of daily bread. And how we are to be feared for, that that terrible curse held in the prophet's imprecation might fall, by chance, on our heads: **LET THEM BE AS GRASS ON THE TOPS OF THE HOUSES, WHICH IS WITHERED BEFORE IT IS PLUCKED UP**. The well of emulation though, is best fitted to Noah. The zeal in it fits best with prelates.

8. Those four wells still Christ exhibits in himself to us who still live in the flesh. The fifth, the well of life, he promises for after this world, and for this the prophet thirsted when he said: **MY SOUL HATH THIRSTED AFTER THE LIVING FOUNTAIN WHICH IS GOD**. Perhaps it is because of the four fountains that he was wounded in four places, as he lived, still, on the cross, and because of the fifth, that when he had given up the ghost, he was pierced through the side. He lived still, when they dug into his hands and feet, and he let run for us who still live, four fountains out of himself. The fifth wound he withstood when his breath was gone, so that, nonetheless, he might open in himself, after death, the fifth fountain to us. Speaking of the mysteries of the Nativity, we find ourselves brought up against the sacraments of the Lord's Passion. Small wonder though, if we seek in the Passion what Christ brought in his Nativity. For it was then the bag split, and the money that was hidden in it, the price it cost to buy us back, he poured down.

IN NATIVITATE DOMINI SERMO TERTIUS

About the Nativity of Christ and his Passion, about the Virginity of the Mother, and about her Fecundity

1. Two kinds of things I have in mind, brethren, in this birth of the Lord. They are different, not to say unlike. A boy is born, and the boy is God. Then the mother is a virgin, and the birth is painless. Darkness. Then a light, new, from the sky. An angel trumpets joy. Praises from a formation of soldiers, high above. Glory goes to God, peace to men of good will. Shepherds running up and down, and they find the word that's been said to them, and tell others. Those that hear them stop for wonder. These things, and other things like them, beloved, come from divine force. They're nothing to do with human feebleness. Golden vases, silver vases, from which, in a solemn time, at the table of the Lord, to the needy too, today, food and drink is served. Not ours to lift them, not ours this golden disk and bowl, but his, who is this food and drink. CONSIDER DILIGENTLY, says the wise one, THE THINGS PUT BEFORE THEE. And I recognize for my own the time and the place of this birth. Tender infant frame, wailing screaming child, and then the poverty and the wakefulness of those to whom the birth of the saving God is first announced, the shepherds. These things are mine. They happen for me. They are laid down before me. They are put there for me to imitate. At night time in winter time, is when Christ was born. By chance? Winter, summer, day, night, are his for the choosing. And it was by chance he was born in this unkind season, at dead of night? Other children do not choose the hour of their birth. Barely underway with life, there is no use of reason in them, no freedom of choice, no power of deliberation. Christ, brethren, if not then a man, was yet with God in the beginning, was God, had the same wisdom and power as the force and the wisdom of God had—he still has. About to be born then, God's son he'd be, and in a position to pick what time he wanted, he picked the most unkempt, all the more for a child and son of a poor mother, with hardly enough of swaddling to wrap him in, barely the crib to put him down. They were needy, very needy, but I hear no mention of soft pelts. The first Adam is decked out in fur tunics. The second is wrapped in swaddling. The judgement of the world does not run down this way. One of two things. He is

deceiving. Or the world judges wrong. But it's not possible for Wisdom to deceive. It is right both that the prudence of the flesh—death itself is a part of it—is enemy to God, and that the prudence of the generations goes by the name of foolishness. What then? Christ, who does not deceive, chooses what is rougher against the flesh. This then is the better, the more utile, and the thing to be chosen. Beware the man who tells you, with his wheedling, some other story—he'll be a seducer.

2. So, he wished to be born at night. Are there some who will still brag about themselves, and not even blush? Here's Christ choosing what he thinks will better make for salvation, and you choose what he puts behind him. Who's the prudent one? Whose judgement the sounder? Whose utterance more sane? After all, Christ lies quiet. Not a word of self-eulogy, self-aggrandizing, self-preaching. And then: look, an angel announcing him, and up there, a whole army roaring praise. You then, who follow Christ, hide this hoard you've found. Love to be not known. Let praise come out of the stranger's mouth, your own mouth keep shut. In a stable though. Christ is born in a stable, lies in a crib. Saying: **FOR THE WORLD IS MINE, AND THE FULNESS THEREOF.** Why does he choose a stable? Obviously, he's reproaching the glory of the world, damning the hollowness of generations. The tongue is not up to words yet. And everything that's in him shouts, preaches, evangelizes. The very infant limbs speak up. In everything, the judgement of the world is remonstrated with, thrown down, tangled. Who, of all men, given the choice, would not choose a robuster body, an age more quick with understanding, than those of childhood? O Wisdom, hauling up from the occult. Wisdom at once truly incarnate and truly veiled. I say this, brethren, but he was promised once before through Isaiah, this little one, with his knowledge how to put away evil and take the good. The desire of the body is bad, its affliction a good. If he chooses the second, it is because the Wisdom Child, Word Child, is putting away the first. For the Word was made flesh, weak flesh, child flesh, tender flesh, impotent flesh, impatient of any accomplishment and all labour.

3. And truly, brethren, the Word has been made flesh, has lived in us. While it was in the beginning with God, it lived in a light which

is out of reach, and there was none could catch hold of it. **FOR WHO HATH SOUGHT OUT THE LORD'S MIND OR WHO HATH BEEN HIS COUNSELLOR?** The man of flesh shall not perceive the things which are of the Spirit of God. But now the man of flesh may catch fast because the Word has been made flesh. All along he has been able to hear only things in the flesh. But look now, Word has been made flesh. He may hear it, in the flesh too. Man, I am saying in the flesh Wisdom makes a showing of herself to you. Once she was occult, look now how she bears herself into the very senses in your flesh. Fleshly, if I can put it that way, is she preached to you. 'Run from pleasure, **BECAUSE DEATH HAS BEEN POSTED AT THE GATE OF PLEASURE.** Do penance, because through penitence the kingdom approaches.' This the stable preaches to you, this the crib shouts, this the infant limbs speak plain, the tears and wails evangelize. Christ has his lament, yes, but not like the rest, or certainly not for the reason the rest usually have. In others it is just feeling. In Christ, affection is uppermost. The first suffer, and do not do, do not still have the use of the will. They weep from this passion. Christ weeps from compassion. They for the heavy yoke which is on all the sons of Adam; Christ for the sins of Adam's sons. And one thing is sure: for whom now he pours tears, afterwards he lets blood. Hardness of my heart. My Lord, as Word has been made flesh, let this my heart be likewise made to flesh. You promised, after all, this too, through the prophet: **I WILL BEAR AWAY FROM YOU,** says he, **YOUR STONY HEART, AND I WILL GIVE YOU A HEART OF FLESH.**

4. Brethren, Christ's tears bring on in me at once shame and agony. There was I playing outside in the square, while in the secrecy of the royal bedroom a sentence of death was brought against me. His Only Begotten got to hear of it. He came out. He had put down his diadem. He was wearing sackcloth, and his head was spattered with ash. He was barefoot, and weeping and wailing, because his little slave-boy had been condemned to die. Quite suddenly, I see him coming out. I am struck dumb. New thing. I am told the reason why. I listen. What am I to do? Play on, make play of his tears? If I have taken leave of my senses, if I am not of sound mind, I will not follow him, will not weep with his weeping. This is the shame I felt. Agony and fear, how did they come about? Well, I have only

to look at the remedy to get a picture of what danger I'm in. I had no idea. I thought I was sound. Then I found this: the virgin's son is sent for, Son of Highest God, and out goes the order he is to be killed, and this way my wounds are tended—with the precious balsam of his blood. See, man, how heavy the wounds for which it is necessary the Lord Christ be wounded. Were they not unto death, death for good, he'd never die, God's Son, to set them straight. The shame then, comes from this, beloved: this gay dissimulation of my passion, when before me I see standing compassion so great in such great Majesty. God's Son suffers with, and he weeps. will man then suffer and laugh? I need only see the remedy, and the agony, and the fear, build up in heaps.

5. But if I stick doggedly with what the doctor tells me to do, a consolation will come of it. I see the heavy wound, the medicine that is to be put on it, and I am led to suppose the wound is not beyond healing. Well, he's not going to apply his precious stuffs for nothing, the wise doctor, Wisdom herself I mean. They would be for nothing, yes, if the cure could be done without them, or, all the more, if even with them no cure were possible. It puts the soul in mind to repent. Once hope takes, the flame of desire leaps bolder. Another source of consolation: what was shown the shepherds in their wake, the angels' visitation and the angels' address. BUT WOE TO YOU WHO ARE RICH, YOU HAVE YOUR CONSOLATION; heaven's (this follows) you do not deserve. There were nobles in the flesh, there were men of power, and the wise of the world. Look at them all. Stretched on their soft mattresses in the very hour that counts, and not one of them is held fit to see the new light, to know the great joy, or hear the angels singing: GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO. It is men they recognize, those who are at their work, providing the body with its victuals—the body will have its victuals—and who are therefore signed by the angelic address, happy address. They recognize in them the human order, instituted by God: in the sweat of his face Adam will earn his bread.

6. I beg of you, beloved, consider with more care than you do how far God has gone to exhort and to save you, to stop the withering in you of a speech which was vivid and efficacious, a faithful speech deserving of hearing, and one no sooner out of the mouth

than done. What do you suppose, brethren? Would I be a little angry if I knew this word I'm speaking to you now had perished empty and useless in your hearts? And who am I? What's this speech of mine? If this small man feels sore when the feeble labour he's put into his speaking falls flat, how much more just the indignation of the Lord of Greatness if our hardness, our neglect, thinks fit to evacuate his so great work? He turns this away from his little slaves, and to save them bends down and takes the form of a slave himself, Only Begotten of God the Father, God blessed above all that is and down the generations.

3. The scene

Half a century before Francis of Assisi introduced the Christmas crèche into Western Christendom, thus setting the tone for what was to become one of the highlights of Christian devotion, Bernard of Clairvaux, in his third Sermon on the Nativity, had given a moving and suggestive description of the participants in the scene. Looking at it as a group-portrait frozen and reduced to art, we discern all the elements required for a proper Christmas ensemble: Joseph, Mary, the child, the shepherds in the fields, the heavenly choir of angels and, in the background, the adoration of the three kings as well as the offering in the temple. The child in his narrow manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes, starts crying, the angels sing, the shepherds listen thunderstruck, heaven flashes with lights and 'the night is turned into day'. Even the intended effect of this scene upon the minds of Bernard's audience becomes part of the *mise-en-scène*. The fellow-brothers, taking up their monastic duty, are seen to start weeping as well; kneeling down as it were in front of the holy family, they include themselves in the picture. In that humble state they adore God and 'as the eyes of the servants are in the hand of their lords, so the eyes of the heart look at their Lord'. 'O, might it be,' so Bernard adds to this Psalm-text, 'that Mary, Joseph and the child in the manger, can always be found in us.'

What is the context of this picture, the frame of this painting? The immediate setting is not the world of popular devotion, but

rather, as indicated by the inclusion of the audience, the austere space of the Cistercian monastery. It is there that the monks celebrate their nocturnal vigils. In that act they link themselves to the shepherds in the fields.

For to the vigilant shepherds, keeping the nocturnal vigils, the joy of the new light is evangelized and they are told about the birth of the Saviour. To the poor and to the labouring, not to you wealthy people, who 'already have your consolation', as well as the divine woe, during the vigils of the night, the holy day has lightened up, and the night has been as daylight; yea, it has been turned into day, according to the words of the angel: 'unto you is born the Saviour, today, not tonight.' For the night is waning and day dawns, the true day coming forth out of day, God's salvation, Jesus Christ our Lord, who is God to be praised for ever. (Nat 5 5)

Whatever the degree of visibility of the different persons in the group-portrait may be, it is the effects of this chiaroscuro which first and foremost catch the eye of the beholder.

The variety of images in the Christmas-scene raises the question of how they should be analyzed. Is it possible to follow the figurative hints of description in trying to assess the position of the different persons involved in the portrait without being overwhelmed by the immense power of the *nova lux* shining in the darkness? Or do those images lose their distinct features in the flash-light of the *nox illuminata sicut dies*? What exactly happens in between the *chiaro* and the *scuro* and what can be said about the organisation of profiles which is supposed to be going on between those two extremes?

There is no doubt as to the identity of the dominating figure in the Christmas-scene, although the evidence is less strong from a quantitative point of view. It is in Christ the child that heavenly power and light are concentrated. As a result, the universe is governed by the smallest figure imaginable from the most remote and dark corner of the earth. In the opening sentence of the first sermon Bernard tries at length—or rather in depth, as I intend to make clear—to mark the mystery of the heavenly presence within human bounds once and for all.

Beloved, great is today's solemn feast of the Lord's nativity. But the briefness of the day demands a brief sermon. No wonder if we too pronounce a brief word when God the Father has made the abbreviated word. Do you want to know how long and how short he made it? 'I fill', so that word says, 'heaven and earth.' Now the word has become flesh and finds itself in a narrow manger. The prophet says: 'from centuries to centuries you are God,' and, see, he has become a one-day-old child. For which other purpose, brethren, or on which other grounds did the Lord of majesty strip himself, humiliate himself and abbreviate himself but in order to make you do the same? (Nat 1 1)

So, even before knowing the content of the sermons *In nativitate domini*, when comparing their ending with their beginning, we are confronted with an enormous build-up of suspense. In a sense the simultaneity of the shepherds in the fields and the vigil of the monks in the victorious daylight of the today/*hodie* (sc. *Christus natus est*) as depicted in Sermon 5 is already adumbrated by the opening sentence of the first sermon. It is one thing, however, to evoke the liturgical setting of the *hodie* (*hodierna Dominicae Nativitatis sollemnitatis*) both at the beginning and the end of the series of sermons, and quite another to link one's own preaching of the sermon to it, claiming that such an identification is compatible with this liturgical effectiveness. While there is no need for liturgical imagery to reach out beyond itself in order to be effective—since as long as it is being recited it cannot fail to be successful—the first and last words of Bernard's sermons are uttered in the barren emptiness of his monastic church or chapter. Consequently, there is neither the encouraging smile of the capitals nor the sweet sound of accompanying music to cheer Bernard on once he has embarked on giving his own version of Christmas. Referring, right after the solemn evocation of this feastday (*grandis...sollemnitatis*), to the brevity of the day which serves as an incentive for delivering a short sermon—the implication of this brevity being none other than the author's claim to imitate the Father in producing the Son in the shape of *verbum abbreviatum*—Bernard compels himself to go all out. No wonder that on this narrow path images are no longer of any help as illustrations of the different points being made,—apart from the fact that they are

officially banished from the monastic environment in which the sermon is supposed to resound. Rather than through extensive elaborations it is through concentration and intensity—*brevitas*—that Bernard's rhetorical gamble might be saved. For that purpose he needs to create a *verbum abbreviatum* of his own compatible with the divine one under consideration. In visual terms this means the requirement to produce images beyond the realm of light and darkness. But how can one express such an 'invisible' image? Whatever the prospect of success may be, so much is clear: all of a sudden we find ourselves far removed from the simple pictorial nature of our glorious opening-scene.

4. *The geometry of Christmas*

What then is the shape of the *verbum abbreviatum*? It is quite simply the incarnation, the eternal word spoken by God and materialized and contracted in the narrow forms of the human body. 'Heaven, it says, I fill, and earth; and now the word has been made flesh and lies in the narrow manger'. Before analyzing the structural aspects of this picture I turn to Bernard's *De consideratione* for a description of the knowledge of God in terms of dimensionality. Next I shall examine the possibility of those terms also being applied to the godhead in the diminished shape of its earthly manifestation.

At the end of the fifth book of the *De consideratione* Bernard presents the following 'artificial' description of God.

What then is God? Length, I say. What is that? Eternity. It is long to the extent of having no limit either in place or time. It is breadth too. And what is that? Love...it extends itself into the infinite. It exceeds not only all affection but all knowledge...What more is it? Eternal...God is eternity, God is love: length without extension, breadth without broadness. In both cases He equally exceeds local and temporal restraints, but by liberty of His nature, not because of the mass of substance. He

is unmeasured in this way, who has made all things to measure; and though unmeasured, yet this is the measure of his own unmeasuredness. (Csi V XIII 28)

It is tempting to view 'length without extension' and 'breadth without broadness' in an almost Pseudo-Dionysian sense. The obvious negation implied in those paradoxes—length can hardly be seen to maintain its own self without extension—would thus be solved in 'the supereminence of the knowledge of Christ' (as Bernard puts it), reminiscent of Dionysius' *super-essentialis/hyperousios*. This, however, is not how Bernard tries to solve the dilemma. A Dionysian solution would present Bernard with the following problems. Apart from the fact that it reduces the divine, however supereminent, to a state of utter ineffability in imposing infinity upon human language, negative theology, in its attempt to express the divine, somehow seems to leave linguistic/semantic modes of expression far behind. Consequently, every step on this road towards God would simultaneously be a step away from Him making man move 'progressively backwards'. Language which, for the time being, is being stretched to the utmost, so as to cover up the process of alienation by means of its metaphorical functions, is bound to break down in the end, leaving the superessential feature of unmeasured measure for what it is or, rather, for what it is not.

On the other hand, the fact that Bernard interprets *immensitas* in affective and emotional terms such as love does not mean that he tries to turn quantitative categories into emotional ones. Put in geometrical terms, the line towards infinity is not paralleled by a sideline, indirectly, metaphorically explaining its meaning. The immense love, for example, cannot be taken out of this scientific context in order to be made part of a grand design of devotional history. As Bernard says, there is length and breadth, but without any extension; that also means without any duplicating metaphor. Nor does God exceed the narrow bounds of space and time so as to be seen as an enormously extended body. If there are lines to be drawn—and Bernard nowhere indicates his wish for emotion or piety without articulation—, they ought to take into account the liberty of God's nature. It is safe to assume that this free divinity, not being the result of either negation or super-affirmation, maintains its geometrical form: it really is length and breadth, however

subtle and however close perhaps to invisibility. Further, not being measured by man and not admitting extension, it stays in touch with the measure it has created to measure. It is like simultaneously watching an early and a later Mondrian. After some time one inevitably discerns the dimensions without extensions. The subtle 'open' lines of the abstract paintings can be read retrospectively in the figurative, closed forms of the earlier ones. The contours of the tower in Domburg are seen to be on the brink of losing the body, the *enormitas substantiae*, of their pictorial shape in order to be reshaped into the lightness of lines.

No wonder that the divine dimensions thus described are full of emotions of love and broadness of feeling, reminiscent of the *modus sine modo* which is the definition of love in *De diligendo deo*.

Tali modo immensus est qui omnia fecit in mesura; et quamvis immensus, hic tamen modus et ipsius immensitatis/In such manner He who has made everything to measure is unmeasured; and though unmeasured, this is the measure of his own unmeasuredness.

Immensity finds its measure in being unmeasured with respect to what it has created to measure. That is the freedom of the line which can no longer be extended and the point which can no longer be multiplied. Infinity is no longer a threat nor are the restraints of place and time since divine mathematics is measuredly unmeasured and free.

In their mathematical outlines of *modus sine modo* love and eternity participate in the same dimensional structure. Admittedly, human discourse couches them in what seem to be images and metaphors. And in a sense, that is what they are. Re-reading the divine dimensions in human imagery, however—like watching the early and later Mondrian—, we find that the nature of images turns out to have changed fundamentally with respect to their figurative shape. Measured by measured unmeasuredness, they share the same geometrical position as their 'abstract', divine counterparts. Consequently, on whatever side of whatever (unmeasured) line they manifest themselves, their interior structure is as razor-like in its effect as the geometrics of the divine Word itself. No extensions, no sidelines are allowed to come to the surface. Images—visibility—so it becomes evident, do have a life of their own.

If in the *Sermones in nativitate domini* the answer to the question 'Do you want to know how long, how brief He has made the Word?' refers to the contraction achieved by the *verbum abbreviatum* as it lies in the manger—that is within the narrow bounds of space and time—, there is no real incompatibility with the fact that in the *De consideratione* God's love is said to transcend those limits. The special dimensional nature—the proximity of the unmeasured God to what He has made to measure—allows for such a divine move. It remains to be seen, however, whether Bernard's command of language is yet capable of preserving the underlying abstract origin of the *verbum abbreviatum* in human imagery. Divine geometry, universally valid though it may be, is no less subject to the fragility of human existence than the child in the manger. The real mystery of the (visual) transformation of lines into images and images into lines—or rather the mystery of their identity—is to be found after all in the fact that the human mind in its search for words in face of the incarnated God is confronted with that which no ear has ever heard and no eye has ever seen.

It is the unheard of newness of this situation which requires extraordinary skills on the part of its literary accountant. The rhetorical bravura with which Bernard announces his intention of producing a *verbum abbreviatum* of his own which will reflect the brevity of the divine Word—thus promising implicitly to gather heterogeneous elements and contradictions into the tightness of a *verbum abbreviatum*—raises feelings of anxious expectation on the part of the reader rather than guaranteeing a successful ending. How will Bernard manage rhetorically to maintain both the uniquely geometrical structure and the abbreviated nature of the incarnated Word? Can he produce in human language something new and original, not derived from secondary sources, without it ceasing to be communicable?

All contradictions come together in the apparent visibility of the incarnated Word. Visible it certainly is, if not overvisible, be it baby-wise rather than as an *enormitas substantiae*. But precisely in its smallness it assumes the status of length without extension. As such it possesses a certain untouchability. It is up to Bernard to translate into language this *verbum absconditum* which, 'being in the form of the Father has stripped itself and taken on the shape of a servant.' A situation of conflicting images, it seems. Expressed in

terms of Christmas it appears that light and darkness have lost their direct meaning, even in a metaphorical sense. The darkness of the night is no longer what it used to be, nor is the brightness of daylight. How tempting it seems to grant the *verbum abbreviatum* its paradoxical status and, anticipating the end of the *Sermones in nativitate domini*, have night simply be changed into day. That, however, would run counter to the structural status of the Word: its length, its breadth and depth. It means a failure of Bernard's rhetorical challenge simply to drive home his point in such a manner. The shepherds, after having seen a light in the middle of the night, will have to be prepared for a more subtle play of light and darkness when they enter the obscurity of the manger that shelters the source of all commotion. Quite appropriately, Bernard appeals to his fellow-monks to rise to the occasion and 'not to suffer having so *precious* an example exhibited to them in vain (*sine ratione*)'. If they can further avoid making a caricature of the *verbum abbreviatum* (which has stripped itself to the degree of near-unrecognisability) by not behaving like 'inflated worms', they may even contribute to the possibility of Bernard's success. Their readiness for spiritual renewal, rooted in the same arid barrenness as the preacher's willingness to speak up, may encourage the latter to walk the tight rope between the precious example of the *verbum abbreviatum* and his own verbal repetition and re-creation.

5. *Paradise as verbum abbreviatum*

Let us now follow Bernard in his attempt to assess the dimensions of the divine Word in the manger. In Sermon 1 of the *Sermones in Nativitate domini* he appears to stay within the bounds of recognisable, 'figurative' images. The Christmas child is the rich source from which divine presents flow. As such he is paradise regained. Next, that paradise turns out to be the very place where the cross of Christ has been erected, his wounds being the fountains of salvation. Accordingly, a closer look at Christmas reveals the mysterious events of Easter.

But what about the geometrical dimensions of the abbreviated Word, its length, its breadth and its depth?¹ Or are the visualisations of Christ to be considered merely as coincidental and disparate images?

A closer look at the first stage of the *verbum abbreviatum*'s stay on earth indeed produces an extension. The little child which has come to us from heaven brought presents with him not at all small in size (*parvulus...non parum*).

And it was not only the people living at the time who benefited from it; for he is an inexhaustible fountain. Our fountain is Christ the Lord, from which we are cleansed as it is written: 'He who has loved us and cleansed us from our sins.' (Nat 1 5)

So, whatever the nature of the constraints which narrowed down the divine Word to the incarnated Christ, God's infinite and eternal love suffers no limitation in the process. Clustered around in the *verbum abbreviatum*, it shines out with great intensity and with an enormous range, thus demonstrating a complete accordance with Bernard's description of God in the *De consideratione: longitudo sine protensione, latitudo sine distensione*. Free by nature, it exceeds the bondage of place and time.

The logical sequence to the exuberant image of Christ as fountain is its extended version: paradise. Out of the waters of divine grace, that is, the boundless mercy, wisdom and love of God, a richly irrigated plantation arises, a garden of *bona conversatio* which prospers in eternal viridity. There is even a fountain—the fourth one—coming after the fountains of mercy, wisdom and grace which transforms water into fire. In the middle of this burning point of all embracing love the fountain, Christ, emerges in his extended, though as yet hidden form: *paradisus noster dominus Christus est*.

Do you think that we can find the fourth fountain (of love) in order to reclaim idyllic paradise by irrigating the plantation?

¹ The convergence of rhetorical and geometrical notions in the *verbum abbreviatum* may be compared to the large dot by which Joyce ends chapter 17 of his *Ulysses*. Levin (Levin 1944: 91) comments on this passage as follows: 'With this exact locus in time and space, with the latitude and longitude of himself [i.e. Bloom] and his wife in their profaned bed, consciousness darkens.'

For if we cease hoping for paradise being given back to us, how shall we hope for the kingdom in heaven? If you do not believe in earthly things, I say unto you, how will you believe if I tell you of heaven? Now since a firm expectation of future things is offered by a presentation of the present, we have a much better paradise which is much more enjoyable than the one our forefathers had. And our paradise is the Lord Christ. (Nat 1 6)

There can be no doubt that Bernard's fellow-monks, upon taking in this flowery description of paradise, are reminded of their own monastic surroundings, their *locus amoenus*, the more so since Bernard shows the expectation of things to come to be clearly rooted in the memory of things past; and both past and future are present in the *hodie*, in this case, the earthly, material setting of the mind remembering. This *hodie* reminds us of the Christmas-scene, but can it still be said to be there? Or rather can we still be said to be in it? What right has Bernard to extend the *verbum abbreviatum* to the fountains of paradise? What is the ratio of such a 'metaphorical' jump? Rather than being a matter of right it is a matter of necessity. By touching ground, i.e. the earth, the incarnated Word reveals *hodie* the barrenness of paradise. The latter yearns not only for water as a superadded present. Without it it cannot long be sustained; it is on the brink of collapse.

Truly our earth is not fertile at all in producing seed, that is the seed of a good walk of life (*conversatio*, that is, monastic life). It will perish easily, it will weaken easily unless it be helped by frequent irrigation, as we rightly ask for this kind of grace when we pray in the Lord's Prayer for our 'daily bread'. (Nat 1 7)

In face of the threat of aridity there is a binding presence of the different aspects of paradise centred around the *verbum abbreviatum*. For in a timeless moment the inexhaustible fountains of paradise are countered by the reversal of abundant fertility into aridity. In that respect its borders are shown to possess the same dimensional outline as the divine in the *De consideratione*: *longitudo sine protensione, latitudo sine distensione*. Those lines do not need extension in order to comprise ugliness and disintegration as well as beauty and form. Paradise in its geometrical form is

measured from the inside rather than from the outside. Looking for an opening in that fence one is referred inside to the simple lines which, almost invisibly, 'draw' the whole monastic site 'to a close'. Being without extension means that there is no more—no more measure and nothing more to be measured—than that. There is no end to those lines, nor is the infinitude implied in them the carrier of chaos. Rather, the intensity of the divine presence makes paradise on earth—that is, insofar it can be as visualized on earth—and the Cistercian monastery, the expression of the *verbum abbreviatum*. For in it are clustered both the wild abundance of the fertile forest and the austere lines of architectural form.

Paradoxically, seen from a more 'symbolic'/'metaphorical' point of view, the forest stands for chaos and the architectural form for divine order. Taken together however—and the monastic site does not allow of disjunction—the form imposed on the wilderness around it highlights both the abundant fertility and the barrenness of the place. One looks—as in Fontenay for example—through the *porta mortis* in the church straight into the daylight forest. The intensity of that picture is caused by this *ad fenestram* effect of the *porta mortis*—the narrow spot in the monumental wall of the church—which frames the indomitable chaos around it; the green forest contracts to the size of the *porta* which conveys a blinding light to the eye of the beholder. The indivisibility of this moment, however, robs the forest of its formlessness and the church of its austerity. Where grace has touched the earth incarnately, life and death have become interchangeable. The intangibility of this moment—the conflation of light and darkness in a *nova lux*—implies that there is no discernible point where form touches upon the chaos which it is supposed to exclude and chaos upon the form which it turns out to include. For this reason Bernard's paradise cannot be seen as a comparison with something outside the monastery or as an illustration of an underlying reality. It is rather, quite literally, an extension along the lines of a *verbum abbreviatum*. Consequently, images produced within that point, as if originating from it, no longer have fixed roots; they float around like 'the spirit borne upon the waters'.

Amazingly enough, Bernard keeps his promise to preach Christmas according to the outlines of the divine Word. In doing so he performs what within the cultural bounds of the *artes liberales*

had been the privilege of the *dialectica*, the short cut taken by the intellect, by which it can cut through the variety of human speech and thought and grasp its objects in their most economical proportions. Now it turns out to be possible to achieve the same effect by means of a refined manipulation of images as well. Exactly what happened?

The water which had abundantly sprung from the sources of mercy, wisdom, grace and love, irrigating a garden of ever increasing size, suddenly shrinks down to a minimal form reminiscent of the little rivulets which run through the monastic site. Unexpectedly, there emerges a fifth fountain, only to be seen after this life. It is the living fountain longed for by the thirsty soul of Psalm 41. At this point Christmas and Easter come to coincide. The manifestation of Christ in this fountain—the most constrained one so far—displays a crucified man. At the same time the four preceding fountains reveal a changed face: they are now the four wounds afflicted on Christ on the cross, while he is still alive. The fifth fountain, however, springs out of Christ's side at the moment he dies.

He was still alive when they pierced his hands and feet that he might produce out of himself for our benefit the four fountains during our lifetime. He suffered the fifth wound when he had already expired that he might equally reveal his fifth fountain to us after death. (Nat 1 8)

Close to invisibility, beyond life, the supreme fountain, like the fountain in the middle of the cloister, finds its origin in one single point. As such it is the ultimate abbreviation of water in any form and extension whatever: *longitudo sine protensione*. In the end that point enables us to discern its final dimensions right through the Christmas-scene: concentrated in the passion of Christ. Water being the running theme thus bridges the sacramental stages of birth, baptism and the passion—the fifth wound producing water instead of blood.

But speaking about the mysteries of the Nativity we suddenly find ourselves investigating the mysteries of the Lord's passion. Yet it is no wonder if we look to the Passion for that which Christ has brought us in his Nativity. For at that moment, after the tearing of the bag he poured out the money

which was hidden as the price for our redemption./*tunc enim, conscisso sacco, pecuniam, quae latebat, in pretium nostrae redemptionis effudit.* (Nat 1 8)

The ensemble of images conjured up here, i.e. *Tunc—conscisso sacco—pecuniam quae latebat*, is an allusion to Genesis 37 which tells the story of the journey of Joseph's brothers to Egypt. Because of the drought in their homeland their father had commissioned them to buy food in fertile Egypt. After their successful visit to their brother who remained unrecognized they return, not knowing that Joseph has put the money exchanged in the transaction back into their bags in order to invite them later to a feast of recognition.

The *tunc*/then refers first of all to the Lord's passion when final redemption was wrought and given to man. In other words, this moment is the extension of the *hodie* of Christmas to Easter in sacramental unity. This—obvious—reading is reinforced by one of the images in the ensemble mentioned above, i.e. the *conscisso sacco*/'the cutting of the bag', which, in its literal form is taken not from the Genesis story—which reads: *aperto sacco*—, but from Psalm 29,12: *conscidisti saccum meum et circumdedisti me laetitia*, thus hinting at the tearing down of the veil of the temple at the moment of Christ's death, that is, the moment of the fifth wound. Further, that wound returns in the *effudit*/'he poured out' which brings back the sense of water streaming from Christ's side.

There is another dimension to this story, however. The evocation of the Genesis story is so suggestive and powerful as to draw the *tunc*/then (back) into its own dramatic setting. *Tunc*/then signifies first and foremost the moment the brothers discovered they had been carrying the money which—sacred irony—happened to be their own without their knowing it. *Pecuniam quae latebat*/'the money which was hidden.' Exactly when? From eternity, in the holy of holies in the temple, or since the *hodie* of Christmas—the money of the *verbum abbreviatum* in the crib? As it is, all Bernard can say from a liturgical point of view is: *hodie Christus natus est*. That *tunc* is the moment of the Lord's passion and the redemption of man, visualised in the moment of the Genesis story when hungry and thirsty nomads from the east discovered the treasure they were carrying, and which was theirs. It seems to be absorbed into a presence where a line has been drawn. In that process of visualisation however, the drama unfolding in the story—living up to the

geometrical form of the *verbum abbreviatum*—ceases to be an illustration of something else. The lines with which this scene has been drawn being *sine protensione* and therefore almost invisible, reduce the all-embracing *hodie* to the indivisible moment of the discovery of the *pecuniam quae latebat*. What is left looks like a miniature of Christmas. Amidst the general darkness at the hour of the Lord's death the glorious lights in the sky have taken on the shape of one moment's glitter in a shepherd's bag.²

6. Christmas à la hausse

At the beginning of Sermo 3 of the series *In nativitate domini* Bernard once more outlines the Christmas-scene in lively terms.

In the darkness a new light shines from heaven, the angels announce great joy, a huge heavenly army sings praise, glory is given to the Lord, peace to men of good will. The shepherds run, they find the word which has been spoken to them, they convey it to others. Whosoever hears it, is full of admiration. (Nat 3 1)

By now we know that it is not enough to watch this scene and be moved to the degree of shedding a sentimental tear of joy or pity. What counts are the dimensions of the events under meditative consideration. How does one account for the power of God contracted to an image of human frailty? A proper understanding of this situation demands an ability on the part of man to spot the dimension of the divine. But once it is spotted, the divine word does not stop at the fixing gaze of the beholder. Having the molecular size of the *verbum abbreviatum*, it penetrates the eyes of the monks celebrating and puts the machinery of their interior imagination into action. Thus it does not meet any visible resistance (of wrongly

² The combination of gems (here the *pecunia* hidden in the bags), liquidity and the wounds of Christ dates from early Christianity. See Dronke 1970: 155. Dronke, discussing Hildegard of Bingen, mentions the early Christian *sphragis*-imagery, 'the word *sphragis* itself meaning both gem and wound. Again, in medieval lapidaries, as in Hildegard's own *Physica* [preface to Book IV, PL 197: 124C ff.], a number of jewels were regarded as crystallizations of liquid substances.'

seized exterior images, for example). How could it stop, being length without extension, except by being blocked by outsiders who do not share the axioms of Cistercian geometry?

And I do acknowledge the time and place of this Nativity to be mine, the fragility of the child's body, the cries and tears of the little one, but also the cries and tears of those who were the first to whom the Nativity of the Saviour was announced,—the poverty of the shepherds and their vigils. Those are mine, they perform it for my sake, they are exhibited for me, they are proposed before me that I might imitate them. (Nat 3 1)

Space, time, shepherds, vigils, imitation: they all come together in the *hodie* of the nocturnal vigils. The liturgical setting of the Nativity suggests its imitation to be inclusive, something to be celebrated, part of a drama rather than something which can be separated from its setting, something which, today or tomorrow, could be approached or preached about from the outside.

Knowing, however, that all those different elements of Christmas coincide both in space and time in the *hodie*, is not the same as seeing it happen within the required geometrical dimensions. In other words, place and time should be shown to be length without extension, to contain the *deus absconditus*. What then is the real shape of this scene, what its adequate visualisation?

The opening of Sermon 3 gives a hint as to where one should look. Between the two passages quoted from the first section—the *fulget in tenebris lux nova* and the *ego agnosco mea esse*—the following evocation of the *hodie* can be read:

They [that is, all the pictures from the Christmas-scene] are bowls of gold and silver which, because of so much festivity, are today administered on the altar of the Lord even to the needy. Those are not be carried (away) by us; unto us no plate of gold or copper is given, but the food and drinks which are in them. (Nat 3 1)

So back we are—associatively speaking—at the *tunc* which we came across at the end of Sermon 1; the 'then' which bridged the mysteries of Christmas and Easter in the abbreviated form of a remote point in archaic times: the *pecuniam quae latebat* in the bags of the shepherds. The gold and silver containing the food and drinks

indicate the preciousness, the untouchability of the hidden treasure while at the same time exposing it to a daylight discovery.

Now upon consideration the image-cluster of gold, silver, jewelry, diadem, treasure and torn bags is a running theme in the series of *Sermones in nativitate domini*. Let us just sum up the places where jewelry, in different configurations, plays a part:

- * Sermon 1,3 indicating the sin of Adam. 'The Lord does not come to judge but to save the earth. Have you been persuaded in the past by an unfaithful servant secretly to steal the royal diadem and put it on your head? Being caught in the act you are surely scared, are you not?'
- * the *pecunia quae latebat* quoted above, being the concluding sentence of Sermon 1
- * Sermon 2,5 about the Lamb of God who opens the booklet containing the *thesaurus absconditus* (cf. Revelation 5,4–5), reminiscent of the *pecuniam quae latebat*. 'Lamb of God show the Jew your pierced hand and feet, that out of them may come the treasure of salvation hidden in them and abundant redemption'
- * Sermon 3,1 about the golden bowls, quoted above
- * Sermon 4,1: a description of the Christmas night as the occasion ascetically to 'sing psalms and spiritual songs' (cf. Ephesians 3,19) as contrasted with the external splendour in many churches.

But how many altars shine today with gems and gold? How many walls are decorated with tapestry everywhere? Do you think that the angels will stop at those and pass by the people dressed in rags? If that is so, why has he appeared to the shepherds of sheep rather than to the kings of the earth? Why does the Saviour himself who owns both gold and silver cherish holy poverty as far as his body is concerned? (Nat 4 1)

This text may echo Bernard's attitude toward Cluny and Suger of St.Denis. It indicates that there is no point in the display of gold and silver at the cost of the disappearance of the Word's dimensions which they are supposed to bring out.

The *saccum scissum* taken from Psalm 29,12 also belongs to this cluster of images, playing an extended role in the Joseph-scene at the end of Sermon 1 (being associated with the veil of

the temple). In addition to a short appearance in Sermon 4 it figures together prominently with the diadem in Sermon 3,4.

I was playing on the square when inside the royal room the death sentence was passed on me. His only begotten son heard about that; he came out of the palace, took off his diadem, dressed himself in sackcloth... (Nat 3 4)

How do we go about detecting the sacraments of Christmas and Easter in the moment of glitter which shines in this cluster of texts and is brought out in its briefest form in the discovery of the money in the bags of Joseph's bothers? How do we maintain their brevity? As far as the brevity is concerned, instead of an ever increasing concentration, the content of the *saccum conscisum* seems to expand all the time. Apart from Christmas and Easter it turns out also to contain their 'liturgical' repetitions as well as memories from remote stories of the past. Moreover, there is another problem in the cluster of diadem texts. Suggesting, as in the Joseph-story, for example, first and foremost a discovery, it stands in other texts for secrecy and hiddenness. The diadem is stolen or taken off, disappearing into darkness where it can hardly be found. Any attempt to give an adequate description of this cluster should take this dimension into account.

Let us first observe the elements of Christmas which are associated with this cluster of jewelry. There is, of course, Christ in the manger, and then there is Bernard, the author-monk who has claimed the Christmas-scene to be his own private property. To make things even more complicated, although from a religious/historical point of view Christ comes first, priority has to be given to Bernard as the rhetorical performer of the scene. In other words, once this cluster has been introduced, it should do what it ought to do: present Christmas in a monastic setting.

As far as this setting is concerned, the manger is covered by the stable, the stable by the sky, the sky by the night, and the night by the barren season of winter. All this is still in complete accordance with the nature, however expanding, of the *verbum abbreviatum*. Christ is the tiniest point holding together the structure of this universe. To put it in terms of a circle, he is the centre surrounded by a number of concentric circles. At the same time he governs it all; He is the Lord of the seasons, of day and night, of the universe.

If he had preferred to do so, he could have chosen a milder season, a more robust body, a more comfortable home. As things now stand, he is as much a hidden treasure as he is to be kept hidden by his followers, 'celebrated' in an environment which is as unspectacular as possible.

Love to be ignorant, may another tongue than your own praise you, may yours be silent. (Nat 3 2)

Such should be man's reaction in the presence of the Christmas miracle. Sermon-wise that means the reshaping and economising of abundant speech and language and contracting it to the shape of the *verbum abbreviatum*.

Truly, brethren, the Word has become flesh and has lived among us. When it was with God in the beginning, it lived in an inaccessible light, and there was no one who could grasp it. For 'who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been his counsellor?' Carnal man cannot perceive what belongs to the Spirit of God. But even carnal man may grasp that it—the word—has become flesh. If he cannot understand anything but flesh, lo and behold, the Word has become flesh: that means that he can hear it, even in the flesh. O man, wisdom is shown to you in the flesh: once upon a time it was hidden and, behold, it already presents itself to your carnal senses. To stay in that carnal context, it is preached to you in terms of the flesh: flee from sensual delight 'because death has positioned itself on the threshold of delight'; exercise penitence, because, through penance, the kingdom draws near. That is what the manger preaches to you, what the members of the baby body clearly tell you, what the tears and cries proclaim. (Nat 3 3)

So the Word which had been living in an inaccessible light has become flesh. As a result, the light seems to have gone. Yet Bernard reverses the paradox of hidden celestial wisdom into the recognisability of human flesh. Thus he creates another paradox since the incarnated Word which was to be tucked away by whatever sinner managed to grasp it—cf. the robbing of the diadem—, has here taken on tangibility. It looks like Anselm's arguments in both the *Proslogion* and *Cur deus homo* converging into one. Rough carnal language—the physicality of the presence of ears on the head of any *stultus*—cannot but be touched by its once-

hidden celestial counterpart: the Word has become flesh. Yet rather than turning audible language as the source of unlimited configurations into a rich soil for divine vegetation, the incarnated Word achieves its goal by means of linguistic concentration. Once again it is the geometrics of the *verbum abbreviatum* which does the trick. Carnal man cannot perceive spiritual things. But once touched by the Word which has become flesh, carnal fertility shrinks down to the shape of a desert, the home of death; in monastic terms, the realm of penitence. *Age penitentiam, quia per hoc appropinquat regnum*. Instead of continuing along that line and moving upwards towards spiritual expansion, it is at the meeting point of flesh and flesh, audible word and audible word, that the tangibility of language is reduced to the precious moment contained in the golden bowls on the altar. Rhetorically speaking that means: stick to the size of the *verbum abbreviatum*, and the kingdom—the *maiestas domini*—will shine. This hallucinatory change of the scene—*carnaliter tibi praedicatur*—into sudden ‘spiritual’ desert is only possible as long as it takes place within the visible/invisible meeting point of flesh and flesh: during the moment in which length is *sine protensione*. Let us try once more to express this state of affairs in terms of the monastic site. There is the wilderness, abundant disordered vegetation; there is the monastic building complex. The latter touches the former, giving up its formality and as a result the complete scene is electrified. The possibility of the arrival of the kingdom is established once and for all. The wilderness—either the wild vegetation of Fontenay, Clairvaux and Le Thoronet or the more arid looking site of Senanque—loses its one-dimensional character. It is both aridity and abundant fertility: *caro*. The grasp which the monastic form exerts on it holds it in suspense. Whatever the sum total is going to be, death or life, entirely depends on the effectiveness of the incarnational moment. The intensity of a vision, a language amidst complete silence on the brink of visualisation or sound is immense. Fathomless existence is as much in the air as the joy of salvation. And moreover: all of it being *caro* its meaning is as clear as daylight. No one with ears or eyes is excused for not seeing what is going on in this place, monastically speaking, for not doing penance, for not abbreviating his language and vision to the size of the child. There is no way out of this material site, nowhere is there a spiritual shelter welcoming the transcending soul.

It is only in this context of suspense that the following passage dealing with the theme of tears can be understood. Tears in this setting are bound to be theatrical: they indicate the rite of bringing water out of a desert.

Christ weeps. He weeps for us, out of compassion, not out of passion as the children of Adam do. He sheds the tears which will later (*postea*) take on the shape of his blood. Here we are again close to the fountains of Christ's suffering, the *aqua* of the paradisiacal plantation. The moving effect of this scene is rooted in the coming together, by way of carnal preaching, of the immense fertilizing power of this flood of tears and the equally immense aridity of the soil.

O hardness of my heart. O Lord, may my heart become flesh in the same way that the Word has become flesh. For that you have promised through the prophet: 'I shall take away,' he says, 'from you the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.' (Nat 3 3)

In weeping the way he does—*Dominus flevit*—Christ has set the example of the monastic *officium flendi*. Lying in the crib he is not supposed to be the mere object of human veneration and pity. Obtaining a heart of flesh, by imitation of the incarnated Word, requires in effect the immense effort of melting a stone. Once again the monk, taking in the carnality of those words, finds himself in an empty church without pictorial or devotional support. His is no longer the leisure of the observer or listener. He performs his own verbal incarnation into stone and earth—and sheds his baby-seized tears on the barren rock of his heart.

7. Christmas à la baisse

So much for the 'extension' of the Christmas-scene, reduced, indeed, to minimal size. The golden bowl on the altar, possessing an invisible sort of preciousness, has ceased to be there for the taking. Yet it is within this utter lack of visibility that the *verbum abbreviatum* is to be adequately visualized. No longer, of course, on the level of the Christmas-scene but measured rather by the tiny tears of Christ. *Nova lux*, that is, a new story should be told in a

new way. It does not come as a surprise that at this stage the notions of water, fountains, tears and jewelry—as pointedly expressed in the *conscisso sacco, pecuniam quae latebat*—conflate in one final mini-drama.

Fratres, lacrimae Christi mihi et pudorem pariunt, et dolorem. Ludebam ego foris in platea, et in secreto regalis cubiculi super me ferebatur iudicium mortis. Audivit hoc Unigenitus eius; exiit, posito diademate, sacco vestitus, adpersus cinere caput, nudus pedes, flens et eiulans, quod morte damnatus esset servulus eius. Intueor illum subito procedentem, stupeo novitatem, causam percontor et audio. Quid facturum sum? Adhucne ludam, et deludam lacrimas eius? Plane, si insanus sum et mentis inops, non sequar eum, nec simul cum lugente lugebo...

Brethren, the tears of Christ cause me shame and sorrow. I was playing outside on the square, and in the secrecy of the royal chamber the death sentence was passed on me. The king's only begotten son heard about this. He came out, took his diadem off, dressed himself in sackcloth, sprinkled his head with ashes, went barefoot, wept and cried because his little servant had been sentenced to death. I watch him suddenly stepping forwards, I am amazed at this latest event, I ask for the reason and listen. What am I to do? Shall I go on playing and play down his tears? Yes, if I am completely out of my mind, then I had better not follow him, nor shall I mourn with the mourning. That is where the shame comes from. But how [do I learn] about the sorrow and the fear? From the fact that I measure the size of the danger I am in by considering its remedy. I was ignorant, thinking I was all right. And behold, the son of the Virgin is sent, the Son of the most high God, and he is ordered to be put to death that the precious balsam of his blood might cure my wounds. O man, admit to the weight of the wounds for which Christ the Lord had to be wounded. If those had not been mortal—mortal forever—the Son of God would never have died in order to cure them. That is why I am ashamed, beloved, neglectfully to dissimulate passion where I see a display of so much compassion from the

side of so formidable a majesty. The Son of God is in compassion and weeps. Man suffers (is in passion), and will he laugh? Thus the reckoning of my medicine consists of the intensification of my sorrow and fear. (Nat 3 4)

How should we approach this passage, which in its richness seems to have sprung out of a rock? What exactly happened in the split second of the transition from the barrenness of the heart of stone to this fountain of tears? In which way did the *verbum abbreviatum* manage to stay true to type in the *nova lux* of this set of images?

Let us first recall the sub-theme of jewelry: the diadem robbed from the head of God by his servant, the *pecuniam quae latebat* in the *sacco conscisso*, the golden bowl on the altar. As far as brevity is concerned the *pecuniam quae latebat* looked like the shortest possible expression of the *verbum abbreviatum*, *sacco*, *pecunia*, *latebat*, three words referring to a complex story full of unexpected, ironical turns: quasi-innocent shepherds, ignorant that they carry the price of their own redemption, called back by their brother into a recognition-scene full of surprise and tears. As to the *lacrimae Christi*-passage it certainly contains a greater number of words than the Joseph-story. On the other hand, upon closer inspection it reveals an increasing intensity of length without extension. It is only as such, as a *verbum abbreviatum* shorter than ever, that the passage makes sense and appears capable of comprising within its lines both Christmas and Easter. In monastic terms, it is the com-passion of Christ which keeps the process of birth and death in the soul going.

If we look for a unit in this text which might serve as a key to the centre of this microscopic drama, then the *posito diademate*, 'the taking off of the diadem,' may qualify as such. It reminds one of, and suggests a certain continuity with, the archaic Joseph-story in which a glimmer of precious light is displayed at the discovery of the money in the bags of the brothers. In the present scene something even more remote seems to take place. Whatever sparks of light might be distinguished in the secrecy of the royal palace, it is all extinguished *posito diademate*. So the *pecuniam quae latebat* is slightly twisted so as to disappear into further obscurity. If ever there is a Bernardine view of art to be found, it should include awareness of this sudden change. In other words, for gems to be an object of Bernardine art their visibility should be such as to be capable of losing their glitter. That is the mysterious difference

between the golden bowls on the altar and the (spiritual) *gemma* they contain. This is precisely the point where—perhaps—in Bernard's view, Suger's love of jewelry fails, displaying a lack of flexibility to move into further darkness or light.

There is another difference with the Joseph-story which contributes to the Kafkaesque atmosphere of the palace-scene. The *pecuniam quae latebat* is an in-built reference to a well-known story. As soon as the words *conscisso sacco* and *pecunia* touch the memory of the monastic listener, he (supposedly) remembers it all. In other words, the opening of the bags coincides with the rhetorical shock of recognition. The evocation of squares, on the other hand, of innocent children playing, of a death sentence being passed inside the palace, does not refer to any known past event. Nor do the references to biblical texts like the *sacco conscisso* function here as straightforward narrative aides-mémoire. On the contrary, *in platea* and *in secreto regalis cubiculi* verbally referring as they do to Proverbs, Ecclesiasticus and Ecclesiastes respectively, heighten the sense of mystery by evoking connotations with scenes unquoted. But is it conceivable that the allusive power of Bernard might stop at one-dimensional 'quotations' before an audience knowing what he is talking about? How could the very same monk whose memory is supposed to be activated by *conscisso sacco* miss the original meaning of *in secreto regalis cubiculo* coming out of the mouth of the author of the Work in Progress on the Song of Songs? Sharing the same treasure of love-language, preacher and audience cannot have failed to catch the echo of:

Introduxit me rex in cubiculum sui

The king introduced me to his bedchamber

Sharing the same treasure of tears it must have been hard to ignore the following biblical scenes:

Et plateae civitatis complebuntur infantibus et puellis, ludentibus in plateis eius

And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof (Zachariah 8,5)

*Cui autem similem aestimabo generationem istam
similis est pueris sedentibus in foro*

*qui clamantes coaequalibus dicunt
cecimimus vobis et non saltastis
lamentavimus et non planxistis*

What shall I compare this generation with?
it is like boys sitting in the square
yelling at their comrades
we sang and you did not dance
we wept and you did not lament (Matthew 11,16–17)

Taking the same liberties with regard to the Bernardine text as Bernard himself feels free to make with regard to the Bible, we may put the playing children and the secrecy of the royal (bed)room together. As a result, the text becomes as light as a Midsummer-night's dream: elflike children, singing, dancing, weeping, a royal palace, death. And certainly magic is in the air. The words 'Brethren, the tears of Christ cause me shame and sorrow' still mark the monastic, penitential itinerary. The 'innocence' of the playing child, however, injects it with a different dimension.

For this sudden change to make any sense at all, two major implications should be made clear. First, the passage under consideration is to be seen as a Bernardine imitation of the *verbum abbreviatum*. In other words, the story of Christmas as it is told here, is moved to a supra-narrative level where it is going to be enacted in an entirely new mise-en-scène. Accordingly, Christmas can be celebrated here in a transformed version without any direct reference to its original visualisation. For images, having become dream-like, no longer arise straight out of external events; they float freely in the air. Second, after having established Bernard's act of imitation its referential remnants should be removed. It should be taken even further, into the area of identification, although of course identification in this dramatic setting is as meaningless a notion as imitation. All activities which come with the preaching are condensed into one single *verbum abbreviatum*. The original story, its explanation, application, its past and present, its ornamentation, the preacher, the audience, are all set on one single, narrow stage which does not have the luxury of dramatic expansion. The narrator, instead of walking in and introducing himself, has to play the character(s) he is telling us about. In this particular Christmas-play it so happens that, rhetorically speaking, Bernard has incarnated

himself and almost shrunk to baby size: a child playing on the square. *Mea sunt haec...*

So, all of a sudden Bernard's audience, with the sound of 'a heart of stone' still in their ears, watch their preacher becoming transformed into an innocent child. At the same time the desperate outcry about the heart of stone ('O hardness of my heart...') signifying the aridity of the soul, which precedes this palace-scene, is continued in the character of a child, prone to tears and joy. In the transition from one scene to another, from the child Christ in the manger versus the believer's hardness of heart to the child on the palace square, the stony heart is, as it were, on the brink of collapsing into the fluidity of tears.

If we now try to identify the contours of this dreamlike scene where obstacles to different points of view have gone, the following 'lines' come to the fore. Within Bernard's concept of imitation he and Christ have changed places. The child in the manger appears to have turned into a royal prince in the palace and the adult preacher into a playing child. The child will be sentenced to death but in the end it is not the child but the prince who is ordered to be killed (*iubetur occidi*). The very suspense suggested by the contrast between the palace and the square can be seen as being part of a literary exercise in shaping the *figura* of Christ which comprises both innocence and contrition, both tears and joy.

However that may be, let us try our hand at the dramatic aspects of this mystery and have a closer look at the goings on between the two *loci*, the palace and the square. What can be remembered?

First there are the facts. The child plays, the sentence is passed, and then suddenly, the king's son, shattered at hearing the death-sentence pronounced on his little servant, comes out, takes the diadem off, weeps and mourns. If we, by an act of interpretative memory, link the diadem to the jewelry cluster—more or less supposing that the monastic mind might have worked along similar, invisible lines—the following facets can be noted. Sermon 1 indeed contained a diadem. An unfaithful servant (*servus*) took the diadem from the king's head and put it on his own. Plunging into deeper memories Bernard can only hope the monks still remember the Joseph-story. This passage is marked by even greater suspense. The son of the king himself takes off the diadem. Bernard the child, not being present in the palace, does not realise anything is wrong

before he is told so. In fact, he is flabbergasted upon hearing the news (*novitas*), and quite willing to mourn with the mourning. What a shame, so we could read the continued lightness of tone, frivolously not to have realized what was going on in there, in what sounded to be the king's court of love but turned out to be the high court of justice. His audience, however, know better. For them there can be no doubt as to the identity of the culprit. Or has even that identity, in the flight Christmas has taken into thin air, become uncertain?

In the next section it is the turn of fear and sorrow to add their terrifying powers to this ghost story. With tragic irony the preacher can be observed proceeding heroically, conscious of his fate yet ignorant of his guilt. He did not know. He thought he was all right. For him the death-sentence came totally out of the blue. Once again one is reminded of Joseph and his brothers. They carried the king's money in their bags without knowing that it had been deposited there by the king himself. Is this then the right moment to remind them of their crime committed in a dark past? All attention is focused upon the story in which guilt is being transferred to the tragic-comic implications of the final denouement.

Of course, the playfulness of the *nesciebam*, *sanus mihi videbar* is the counterpoint to the desired monastic evocation of fear and sorrow. Nevertheless—and that is also part of the *verbum abbreviatum* technique—there is no more to it than lightness. It is the moment of a *nova lux*: an innocent child playing on the palace-square.

8. Scherzo

Intueor illum subito procedentem, stupeo novitatem, causam percontor et audio... What is the cause of the sudden change, where does it come from and what is its effect?

The aforesaid lightness of this scene as the counterpoint to an obscure *causa* of enormous and incomprehensible proportions might be brought out more efficiently by another dramatic episode from Genesis. In a letter to Innocent II (*epistola* 190) Bernard counters Abelard's view according to which the incarnation of Christ did not

deliver man from the power the devil had rightly exercised over him. Without caring at all about the subtleties of his opponent's ideas, Bernard links the overwhelming power of Christ's redemption to an equally overwhelming power of the devil over man's fate.

Si me insecutus Laban arguerit, quod recesserim clam ab eo, audiet clam me accessisse ad eum, et ob hoc clam recessisse. Subiecit me illi causa secretior peccati, subduxit me illi ratio occultioris iustitiae...

If Laban had chased me down arguing that I left him in secret, let him hear from me that I came to him in secret and therefore left him in secret. A more secret sin was the reason why I was subjected to him, a more hidden justice was the reason that abducted me from him. If I have been sold for nothing, why shall I not be redeemed for nothing? If Assur has offended me without reason, then it is without reason that it asks for the reason for my departure. If he says: 'Your father has sent you,' I shall answer: 'But my brother has set me free.' Why would not justice come from elsewhere, when the culprit comes from elsewhere? It is one person who established sin and another who frees from sin. The one in seed, the other in blood. Or is sin in the seed of the sinner, but justice not in the blood of Christ? But, justice, he will say, should belong to its owner, what about you? Okay. But then guilt too should belong to its owner, what about me?... (Ep 190 16)

Of course, this fragment is not about the mechanics of subterranean or sublunar powers. And the devil—the original theme of the discussion—soon disappears from sight. Ignoring Abelard's similar intention, Bernard brings up as the core of the argument the nature and intensity of man's involvement in evil. What prevails for Bernard in the end is the dramatic subtlety of the whole situation, in other words, the possibility of the application of geometry, the *verbum abbreviatum*, the freedom of movement and speech of both the divine and human antagonists. From a rhetorical point of view there is quite a limited effect to be achieved in the process. All one can do is expand the antithesis justice-sin, and that is exactly what Bernard does. But going on in that manner could result in an ever

widening gap between the two poles. Thus one would lose sight of the near-equivalence of the two main characters, God in the possession of justice, and man in the possession of sin.

Si me insecutus Laban...causa secretior peccati...causa occultioris iustitiae

Neither guilt nor innocence will do for an adequate dramatic picture. For that one needs a mixture of confused identities, blame put on the wrong person etc., while strictly preserving the universal validity of good and evil.

In the Laban-scene Jacob, having robbed his brother Esau of his birth-right (the blessing of the first born son), flees to devilish Laban. For two periods of seven years he does 'penance' with his uncle, earning the continuity of his own treasure. But the *causa secretior peccati* is as stored away in the secrecy of a dark past as the *causa occultioris iustitiae* evokes a mysterious, as yet unknown future. In the meantime guilt still belongs to the guilty person as much as justice belongs to the future just.

Then, as abruptly as the king's chamber turns into a court-room, a hint of innocence, a *gemma* appears to be hidden in this *secretum*. On second thoughts there is admittedly a sense in which Jacob has rightly taken possession of what belonged to Esau, thus anticipating the *causa occultioris iustitiae*. Of course, this memorial train of thought of the reader is to be shifted back all the time to the ongoing rhetorical antitheses between sin and justice, the two coming from opposite sources, which Bernard keeps pouring out. Yet there is a supreme irony in his setting of the scene. If Laban had asked the reason for Jacob's flight, he would have received as an answer a pledge of secrecy. As for the question of guilt, a definite answer is not to be given, least of all, it appears, by the culprit himself. All he can refer to is the dark course of sacred history. It is this secrecy which keeps the contours of the persons involved in this Laban-scene rather vague. 'If he says: "Your father made you addicted to sin", I shall answer: "my brother redeemed me"'/*Quod si dixerit: 'Pater tuus addixit te,' respondebo: 'Sed frater meus redemit me'*. Adam, Christ, Esau, Jacob, Laban, all seem somehow implied. But what is their status within the confines of the narrative? What comes to the fore here is the immense visual strength—as well as length, breadth and depth—of Bernard's

geometry: *verbum abbreviatum*. In the twilight of a mysterious past the shades of symbols move around, seemingly unorganised. Yet in spite of all the looseness and ambiguities the scene is firmly held together by its geometrical structure. Not bothered by the *infra ambitum temporis* around which Abelard built his linguistic skills, Bernard applies his technique of paradisiacal geometry. He is not interested in dimensions that are simply measurable. That kind of art would but lead to undesirable extensions. The different lines *sine protensione* in the Jacob-story, however, are bound to coincide in one indivisible point from which they originate. Inside the scene itself the rhetorical antithesis *culpa-iustitia* has broken down into an as yet unuttered *gemma*. Just as the king's son in the *secreto regalis cubiculi* lays down his diadem, so the word in Bernard's rendering of Jacob's guilt and justice has taken on the shape of his invisible baggage. There is after all a unity of time, place and action. For it is in the split second of this moment that past sin and future justice—extremes as they are and always will be—meet in mutual secrecy. Having stolen the guarantee of salvation from his older brother, Jacob dutifully acts the part in a drama seemingly greater than himself. And yet, as if in a divine comedy, no one from Adam to Christ—and from Christ to Bernard's community—is allowed to fall out of the *structures élémentaires de la parenté*. In bringing down his own guilt—his sin against his brother Esau—to his uncle Laban, Jacob appears to carry up his own innocence to his future brother Christ.

9. Finale

So for the time being Bernard is as innocent on the palace-square as Jacob was guilty in the face of Laban. In the meantime—so we pointed out—fear and sorrow have made their appearance. And it is against this background that Bernard's ignorance gains momentum. That does not mean, however, that the sequence of events follows the straight lines of ignorance being turned into consciousness of guilt: the *consideratio ponderis peccati*. Looking straight into the dark corners of the human mind—which would perhaps be closer to Abelard's approach—does not provide much additional information for the monastic mind. Moreover, the Cistercian monk

has already sold the rights of introspection to his immediate environment: the palace in the desert. It is there that Bernard performs his own *verbum abbreviatum* rather than offering a visualisation of a grand design, be it Christmas or Easter. But that very fact, implying the coincidence of geometry and spatial environment, compels him to make his next step a structurally visible one. Once more we should imagine Bernard as preaching in the barren and unadorned emptiness of his church or chapter. Empty and complete, it is pure form as well as pure matter: incarnation.

For dramatic reasons which follow from the compelling visibility of the *verbum abbreviatum* the ignorant child is met by the appearance of the king's son without a moment of transition.

Nesciebam, sanus mihi videbar, et ecce mittitur Virginis Filius dei altissimi, et iubetur occidi, ut vulneribus meis pretioso sanguinis illius balsamo medeatur.

So the 'innocent' child faces the innocent Son of God, and discovers his own wounds. Again, this whole sequence of events makes but sense as a hallucinatory explosion of images organised with the utmost precision. In that way they turn into the Son of God in the cradle, the tears of the preacher, the child in the square, the son in the palace. When the latter comes out it is but to have his tears transformed into the actuality of *iubetur occidi*. According to the same logic of brevity the precious, gem-like balsam is applied to 'my' wounds without us knowing anything about their coming about. In what seems to be a rapid change of scenes—but is actually the intensification of the *verbum abbreviatum*—it is preciousness and fluidity again (like the precious water streaming out of Jesus' side) which save the day.

The diadem—the spark of light about to be extinguished—is transformed, turned into the fluidity of the balsam being poured into the wounds as was the water from the fifth fountain. When Bernard next urges his audience to consider the gravity of those wounds for which Christ had himself wounded, it is not in a deeply felt compassion with the suffering Christ that the execution of that order has to be found. It is rather a matter of sticking to dramatic reality. One should be ashamed, so Bernard goes on, to dissimulate one's own *passio* where Christ has been so compassionate. Within the limits of the *verbum abbreviatum* there is no space to think one can

practise compassion at the cost of *passio*, to be just a spectator of one's own fate. If there is compassion, it is in Christ. In Sermon 1 the fountains of Christ's wounds could be seen flowing freely. Here it is wounds of the playing child, made visible by the sudden appearance of the prince from the palace, that dominate the scene. However, those two pictures, child and Christ, should not be connected by applying the latter to the former. Within the dramatic setting of the palace-scene, the abundance of streaming water in Sermon 1 has been reduced to the wounds of a child, to be taken care of by means of precious balsam. If there is guilt in this scene, it is the guilt of Joseph's brothers or, for that matter, the guilt of Jacob before his uncle Laban, and if there are tears, they are the Christmas tears of Christ.

To summarize it all and to collect all thoughts and emotions involved, let us evaluate the monastic terminology used by Bernard to make up the balance of his sermon-wise imitation of the *verbum abbreviatum*:

Sic et medicinae aestimatio et doloris mihi et timoris exaggeratio est./Thus the reckoning of my medicine is the intensification of my sorrow and fear.

The reckoning of the cure: measured unmeasuredness, that is visibility, *gemma*, to the utmost degree.

This visibility materialises in *dolor*: that is the unheard of confrontation between the tears of Christ and the aridity of the heart of stone.

Timor: that is the intensification of monastic fear. Fear: that is the final touchstone of the monastic performance, the absence of the possibility to fail, the taking up of the *officium flendi*, the process of transforming stone into water. It is like the awe of the shepherds in the fields, seeing a *nova lux*, night being turned into day, just to discover its source in the 'bags of travellers'. Ultimately, it is the frightening size of the child in the manger as well as the effect of its crystal tears, the contents of the golden bowl on the altar, the *saccus conscissus*, the veil of the temple, the holy sepulchre, the *secretum regalis cubiculi*, a palace-square, balsam, blood, water.

CHAPTER EIGHT

RESURRECTION

1. Prelude to Resurrection in the Sermons on the Song of Songs

'The bedchamber of the king, diadem, blood, balsam, water...' Whatever tendency there is for images in Bernard's discourse to become increasingly transparent and fluent, allusions to the Canticle often prevent them from evaporating into thin air. The bedroom of the king, for instance, represents a primordial reality in the same way that the flowers and scents touch the poetic senses before the latter's a posteriori realisation of metaphorical distance. Thus it seems that scenes from, and allusions to, the Canticle function as archetypes in Bernard's prose. However remote they are—or, more correctly, the remoter they are—the more they remind one of the basic facts of life. Consequently, it becomes ever clearer what they are not. They are not illustrations of a doctrinal-religious body of language in whose service they would act as *ancillae* which one could comfortably dispense with when an assessment has to be given regarding the real nature of Bernard's language. In that respect Peter Damian's famous adagium about the subservient position of the arts to their mistress, the *sacra pagina*, equally obtains for Bernard. For both Bernard and Damian, however, this priority of the *sacra pagina* over the artificiality of grammar and logic is not concerned with doctrinal language as such, or, for that matter, theology, but with the life performance of the monastic theatre in which the Canticle sets the stage.

It is precisely the performative aspect of Bernard's discourse which would seem to become problematic when applied to the Resurrection proper. Dramatic though that event may be, in view of what has really happened one might wonder whether dramatisation can be at all possible, or, if it is possible, whether it is not bound to fail. Both the Nativity and the Lord's Passion present a rich imagery, the manger, the tears, the child, the crucifixion, which in turn was seen

to be transformed into thinness and fluidity. But to whatever degree Christ's birth and passion had been made part of fountains flowing in a paradisiacal garden-setting, the drama of Christ's life and death showed through. The imagery of resurrection, on the other hand, seems to be less potent. Consequently, it seems to offer much less opportunity for poetic dramatisation within the Canticale context. Being rather empty and fragile, or, to put it more bluntly, being simply a non-event, it needs to undergo special treatment by the monastic narrator.

In the following I intend to give an account of the increasing lightness of the narrative as it develops in the Sermons on the Resurrection without losing sight of the eventual Canticle-aspect of the event. To prepare the ground for this operation I shall first turn to Bernard's work on the Canticle itself. What does it tell us about resurrection? Is resurrection as much implied in the poetic-rhetorical structure of the Sermons on the Song of Songs, as is the Canticle in the Sermons on the Resurrection?

Let us first recall the general nature of the Sermons on the Song of Songs. Descriptions of Bernard's *magnum opus* tend to highlight the central theme of the work as 'the intimate love between the Bride and the Bridegroom, between the soul and Christ'.¹ However, although occasionally the dialogue between the lover and the beloved plays its part, the actual place of the Song of Songs in Bernard's commentary turns out to be much more complicated. On the one hand, the biblical text serves as an excuse for Bernard to introduce all kinds of subjects which are often not even remotely related to the central theme of spiritual, bridal love. On the other hand, in the midst of passages in which no trace of the Canticle can be found, Bernard's discourse may take an unexpected turn in suddenly hinting at love.

Underlying those two divergent streams—and holding them together—there is the recurrent presence of a set of literary markers woven into the text, literary aides-mémoire, so to speak, through which the remembrance of the original text of the Canticle is kept alive. The analysis of Sermon 23 has made it abundantly clear how notions such as the seeking, the running to the beloved, the smell

¹ E.H. Cousins in the Preface to Evans 1987: 9.

of the fields and meadows, and the scent of perfumes are distributed all over the text. These basic motifs function as fundamental chords underlying a complex fugue in which incidental texts and words burgeon.

The use of the basic scheme of the fourfold sense of Scripture enables Bernard to execute the process mentioned above consisting of the concatenation of various possible interpretations, through which the original text gradually moves away from its original meaning. Whenever this expanding stream of explanations comes to a momentary rest, a process of transformation occurs whereby the exegetical sequences, for instance, are turned into doctrinal demonstrations. An example. In the first 16 sermons the opening text of the Song of Songs *OSCULETUR ME OSCULO ORIS SUO* 'May he kiss me with the kiss of his mouth'—the kiss in all its aspects: foot, hand and mouth kiss—is established as the overall metaphor for the relationship between God and man before finding its final explanation in another, superior relationship between the Father and the Son, an explanation which refers to a reality in which the human mind can only partly and momentarily participate. As has been pointed out, however, we should take care not to overemphasize such expository sequences, even if it seems to be the 'official' train of thought, while neglecting other lines of development which are working simultaneously or in parallel movements and which may bring about the unexpected appearance of the love-theme from the Canticle.

In reply then to the question whether Resurrection plays a part in the Sermons on the Song of Songs, the preliminary answer has to be in the affirmative. In fact, it will turn out to be one such interruption, indeed, a major incident within the slowly moving stream of reflections on the first verse of the Canticle: *OSCULETUR ME OSCULO ORIS SUO* / Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth. It is not only the relationship between the Father and the Son, i.e. the transposition into dogmatic terms of what it means to kiss and to be kissed that will be interrupted by this event. In talking about resurrection, in however metaphorical a manner, Bernard will be forced to comment on the presence of this central fact of Christian history in his own text. The very centrality of the theme of resurrection will bring to the fore the desire and, more

specifically, the unfulfilled nature of desire, which keeps the monastic mind going. Cutting right through the *longue durée* of the Canticum-commentary, realisation of that desire in language will be brought about, however momentarily, by weaving a resurrection-story into the stream of its literary expression.

What then does this Resurrection story look like? Rather than referring to the actual resurrection of Christ as told in the Gospels, Bernard uses a prototype of the event. In Sermons 2, 15 and 16 we find him recounting a story taken from 2 Kings 4, connecting it closely with the *osculum*-theme of the Song of Songs. We also come across a phenomenon which is ultimately responsible for Bernard's development of this theme: the position of the author in and at the margin of his own story.

In Sermon 15 the text under consideration is *Oleum effusum nomen tuum*/your name is as oil poured out. Explaining the word 'oil' Bernard connects it with the bridegroom. 'What is his name? Jesus. Which Jesus?' Talking about the history of the name 'Jesus', the story from the second book of Kings presents itself as an illustration of the fact that attempts by former Jesuses (Joshuas) in the Old Testament to bring about salvation have failed miserably.

These earlier namesakes were sent in advance in a like manner as the staff of the prophet Elisha went on ahead to the dead child. They could not give sense to the names they were bearing, because these were meaningless. The staff was put on the dead, but there was no noise, no feeling, because it was a mere staff. Thereupon he descended, who had sent his staff ahead, and forthwith he delivered his people from all their sins. Thus he proved to be what was said of him: 'Who is he that he can forgive sins?' It is he who says: 'The salvation of the people, am I.' Therefore, there is feeling and there is life already. It now becomes clear that this Jesus does not have a meaningless name, like all his earlier namesakes. The process of recovery has started, one feels it and cannot keep silent with regard to this benefit. One becomes inwardly aware of it and expresses it. I repent and I confess, and my confession proves that I am alive...Sin, which is the soul's death, had left me neither the feeling of repentance nor the call or word of confession, for I was dead. Now is coming he who forgives all

sins and returns those two things to me and tells my soul: 'I am your salvation'. Is it any wonder that death must recede where life descends (*ubi vita descendit*)? Now one believes with the heart in order to bring about justice and confesses with the mouth in order to bring about salvation. Now the child yawns up to seven times and it says: 'Seven times a day, o Lord, have I proclaimed your glory.' (SC 15 V 8)

So, Jesus accomplished what his predecessors had hitherto been unable to achieve. This part corresponds to the successful descent of the prophet and Bernard clearly relishes describing the effects of that intervention. The staff, on the other hand, representing the prophets who were sent to no avail, is as much part of the story as the final triumph of the prophet. It indicates that before the coming of Christ history was dominated by melancholy sadness. With the failure to deliver ultimate redemption seen as an intrinsic part of all prophetic missions, the faithful were bound to live under a doom of unfulfilled expectation. I shall return to this aspect shortly. First attention should be drawn to the fact that Bernard, as so often, lets the story he tells coincide with his own rhetorical handling of the case. It is not only Old Testament history which presents us with the alternation of delay and retardation. Bernard's very own exposition of the Canticum suffers from the same deficiency. Before eventually telling his audience the true meaning of *oleum*, that is Jesus, his attention was distracted and diverted to other things.

In the foregoing sermon I made a start [to explain the meaning of *oleum*], but all of a sudden a new question arose which I thought I should deal with first, and this took longer than I expected. The cause of this will be no other than that powerful lady Wisdom stretched out her hand to the distaff and that her fingers grasped the spool. She knows how to spin a long thread from a little wool or flax and how to extend this thread (*in longum producere et extendere*) into a large piece of fabric, and thus to provide double sets of clothes for all the members of the family. (SC 15 III 5)

Now in a very subtle way this apology for the delay in the prompt delivery of explanatory information receives a follow-up in the Elisha-story as quoted above and which concludes Sermon 15. At this stage the two levels of delay, the one in the Elisha-story and the

other as the rhetorical excuse for the 'spinning of the thread' are as yet quite unconnected and only reappear fully merged in the prologue to Sermon 16.

In Sermon 16 the Elisha-story once again serves as Bernard's point of departure. The line from 2 Kings, 'And the boy yawned up to seven times' is too obvious an object for exegetical analysis that it could be passed over in silence.

For I would not know of someone being so simple-minded among us as to think this recurrence and this number to be just accidental. (SC 16 I 1)

Further comment on this text is deferred—it emerges again in the third chapter of the sermon: *ET OSCITAVIT, inquit, PUER SEPTIES*—in order to make way for a meditation on the most spectacular feature of the story: the prophet contracting his body to that of the dead boy.

And I do not think it to be void of meaning that the prophet, lying down on the dead body, contracted himself to the size of the body of the boy, connecting his mouth with the boy's mouth, his eyes with the boy's eyes, his hands with the boy's hand. The Holy Spirit made all that so happen, and had it written down in such a manner, without doubt to edify the spirits of those who are surrounded by the loathsome company of the corrupt body...

Therefore, nobody should be surprised or take offense if I linger to examine curiously those things as in the treasury of the Holy Spirit. For I know that to be the way real life looks like and it is of such pleasures that the life of my spirit consists. Yet I say to those who, in a mental hurry, ask a sermon to be finished almost before they see it started, that I also have my obligations to the slow-minded, indeed, above all to them. As for me, my intention is to refresh the heart rather than to produce words. I am supposed to be both profound and progressive. But that should not happen by hastily racing through the subject-matter, but by diligent analysis and frequent persuasion. Though I have been held up in the discussion of the mysteries longer than I had hoped. Admittedly, I had thought one sermon would suffice for us to go

rapidly through that shady and dense forest of allegories and to arrive in one day's journey at the plain of the moral sense. However, it turned out differently. I have already spent two days discussing this matter and there is still some way to go. With a bird's eye I went over the tops of the trees and the mountain peaks. But the immensity of the valleys below and the density of the thickets blocked my view. Could I, for instance, have foreseen that all of a sudden Elisha's miracle would spring up when we were discussing the vocation of the gentiles and the rejection of the Jews? But now we have come across it we should not regret dwelling a little bit on it. After that we will return in due course to what we had abandoned; the quality of the spiritual food will not be the worse for that. (SC 16 I 1)

One of the most striking features of this passage is its multi-dimensional nature. First Bernard evokes the Holy Spirit as the most flexible person in the Trinity conforming himself to the necessities of linguistic expression. In a sense, the traditional spiritual layering of Scripture is dramatised rather than allegorized. The Spirit which blows in whatever direction it wants is here materialized, so to speak, in the contraction of the Prophet—himself the object of Spiritual inspiration—on the dead body. Next the notion 'Spiritual' is extended, if slightly twisted, having its lightness counterbalanced by the gravity of the body weighing down on the soul. Thus in a very ingenuous way Bernard introduces retardation. In accordance with the first line of the first Sermon on the Song of Songs, Bernard's preaching is supposed to benefit spiritual people rather than more 'materialistically' oriented worldly outsiders. Yet, as we have seen in the analysis of Sermon 26, it is the interruptions inside the monastery which simultaneously cause delay to spiritual progress and speed up its coming about. What would monastic life be without the Gerards and without the slow-minded? Accordingly, retardation should be seen as part of meditative pleasure rather than as mere annoyance. So, helping those who are weighed down by the body nicely coincides with enjoying the life of the Spirit. From there a third layer in the text reveals itself: the author who, like his fellow-brothers hovering between the corporeal and the spiritual, barely refrains from identifying himself with the Holy Spirit. He situates himself in the latter's storehouse. As a result, the rest of the

passage is coloured by a set of reflections on the themes of rhetorical delay and mystical longing. But what a curiously reversed mystical experience it is! It is not through a description of purification and illumination that Bernard here tries to get in touch with the Spirit. Rather his use of literary circumventions in the service of 'others' pictures 'mystical experience' as being tied up with the day-to-day routine of monastic life. Bernard cuts right through the dense forest of his own explanatory delay in words reminiscent of Augustine's *Confessiones*.² Merging Augustine's *ictus cordis*,³ which is first and foremost supposed to indicate the apex of mystical experience, with the dense valley below, he turns the spiritual move upwards to material delay. At the same time, instead of describing the brief moment of a mystical *raptus*, he once again introduces the Elisha-story, *subito*, paradoxically, to illustrate the process of the spinning of a narrative thread. It looks almost as if the *subito* appearance of the story plays the role of mystical experience while at the same time causing rhetorical delay. That delay, in turn, ought to be taken as a delight rather than as a regrettable slowing down of spiritual experience.

Thus even in this short, but dense, first paragraph of the sermon a lengthy process comes full circle. The Holy Spirit, responsible for the structure of the Elisha-story and for the wealth of literary treasures, shares his gifts with another author. The latter not only gratefully accepts the offer. He also enters, as we will see, into the circle drawn by the story itself.

Now one of the problems in interpreting this text is that the movement from one layer to another as described above is not an explicit one. Of course, Bernard does not really declare himself identical with the Holy Spirit nor does he explicitly state his authorship to coincide with the free course of divine inspiration. Yet there is a straight line, however undrawn and invisible, between the

² Cf. *Confessiones* VII, XXI, 27; CSEL 33: 168: 'Et aliud est de silvestri caumine videre patriam pacis et iter ad eam non invenire et frustra conari per invia circum obsidentibus et insidiantibus fugitivis desertoribus cum principe suo leone et dracone, et aliud tenere viam illuc ducentem cura caelestis imperatoris munitam, ubi non latrocinantur qui caelestem militiam deserunt...'

³ *Confessiones* IX, X, 24; CSEL 33: 217 '...et dum loquimur et inhiamus illi, attingimus eam modice toto ictu cordis.'

Holy Spirit as the author of the Old Testament stories and Bernard's scrutinising the treasure of the very same Spirit: *cum sciam quia sic vivitur, et in talibus vita spiritus mei*. The intimacy with which the author positions himself in the storehouse of the Spirit makes him untouchable and superior before his audience: 'let therefore no one be surprised or bother me, *cum sciam...*' That same (Pauline) 'timidity' and reservation prevents one from accusing Bernard of coming too close to the mysteries he is in the process of expounding. What happens instead is that his total inclusion in the biblical narrative makes such suspicions look irrelevant. All problems with regard to the appropriate distance from the divine, or the lack of it, are resolved through an on-the-spot performance of that narrative itself.

When Bernard, still postponing the explanation of the text 'and the boy yawned up to seven times', turns once more in the next paragraph to the Elisha-story, and applies it to himself in every detail, he wisely refuses to identify with the prophet as the one who is directly inspired by the Holy Spirit, but identifies with the dead boy.

My faith finds considerable support in the idea that the great prophet himself, powerful in deed and word, condescended to visit me, although I am but dust and ashes; that he had mercy on my dead body, deigned to bend over my dead figure which was lying down, to contract himself and adjust to my smallness, to give the light of his eyes to my blindness, to set free my speechless tongue through the kiss of his mouth, and to stretch out my powerless hands through the touch of his own. I find much sweetness in pondering on these things. It fills my soul with joy and makes my bones sprout in praise and gratitude. Once he wrought that for all mankind. Daily we feel the same being wrought in each of us, the light of understanding being given to the heart, the word of edification to the mouth and work of justice to the hands. He faithfully bestows feeling, usefully bestows words, efficiently bestows action. And that is a threefold cord which it is difficult to break, designed to deliver the souls from the prison of the devil and to draw them behind him to the kingdom of heaven, if you have the right feeling, worthy speech confirmed by your way of life. With his eyes he has touched my eyes, adorning the

head of man with clear lights: faith and intellect. He touched my mouth with his and impressed the sign of peace on the dead because when we were sinners yet, he reconciled us, who were dead to justice, with God. Through mouth to mouth contact he has reanimated in my face the breath of life, of a holier life, that is, than the first one. For the first time he created me to be a living soul, the second time he reformed me to be a life-bringing spirit. He put his hand on my hand, thus giving an example of good works, an expression of obedience. Certainly he sent (*misit*) his hands to do great things in order to train my hands for fighting and my fingers for war. *ET OSCITAVIT PUER SEPTIES...* (SC 16 II 2)

It is obvious that there is no end to Bernard's ever expanding reflections on the text once he has embarked on its interpretation. On reaching the 'tropological' plain we find him designing a plan of action. Good works, strength and readiness to fight the good fight, they all result from the brief contact between the prophet and the dead boy. In the second round, when creation is turned into a life-bringing spirit, the latter is even suggested to have become capable of resurrecting activities himself (*in spiritum vivificantem reformavit me*). Preceding all that is the intimate climax of dramatic experience: the prophet who deigned to come down and visit 'me'. The *suaviter rumino ista* which follows this visit—leading up to the (tropological) design for a new life—sounds like the languid awakening from a deep sleep to be made part, in a following step, of the equally languid rhythm of liturgical life: 'daily we feel this event being enacted in each of us.' It is this daily recurrence which situates the dead man in the proximity of the resurrecting one. In a sense one is reminded of the phrase in Job used by Bernard to characterise monastic *languor*: *SI DORMIERO DICO: QUANDO RESURGO? ET RURSUM EXSPECTABO VESPERAM*/If I sleep I say: when shall I rise and I cannot wait for it being night again (Job 7,4),⁴ indicating the hovering of the mind between rest and vigilance, the one stage never being far from the other. In fact, there is anticipation of the prophet's 'work and speech'. Just as works are the inevitable result of the resurrection of the dead as much as they were part of an already ongoing process, so *sermo*/speech alternates

⁴ Cf. SC 23 IV 11, Chapter Two: 76.

between yesterday's resurrection and today's death—or even more precisely, this morning's resurrection and tonight's death—today's dead boy being yesterday's prophet. In a similar vein this scene of Bernard being visited by the Prophet carries hints and reminiscences of his earlier self-introduction as the author in the treasures of the Holy Spirit. All those elements of daily routine, meditation, rumination and authorship come together in the indivisible presence of the meeting point between the one kissing and the one being kissed. It is only within the narrative of the Elisha-story itself that the two can clearly be distinguished. In what follows we shall see how for Bernard this story is inadequate for expressing the nature of Resurrection. Thus he creates the need for a second, better version in which one and the same person both resurrects and is resurrected. For the time being, Bernard here clearly derives a maximum profit from the presence of two antagonists instead of one: the prophet and the dead boy. Relegating what might have been a potentially unique mystical experience that could have reached beyond tree tops and mountain peaks to the daily routine of *sermo* and *opus*, that is, to the circumlocutions and delays of his own preaching activities, he acts out before his audience what it means to be dead, to be resurrected and to raise.

'How could I have foreseen Elisha's miracle when it crossed my thoughts...?' The author might not have foreseen Elisha's miracle, but could he ever have forgotten it? Earlier in the series on the *osculum*, in Sermon 2, Bernard had referred to the very same story, or rather, had evoked it in a dramatic stage-setting.

Misit puerum, tulit baculum, et necdum vox neque vita. Non surgo, non suscitor, non excutior de pulvere, non respiro in spem, si non propheta ipse descendat et OSCULETUR ME OSCULO ORIS SUI./He sent the boy. He carried a staff, but there was neither voice nor life. I will not stand up, I will not be resuscitated, I will not breathe again for hope unless the prophet himself come down and 'kiss me with the kiss of his mouth'. (SC 2 III 5)

Ordo praeposterus! Rather than first telling the story in detail as he will do later on in Sermons 15 and 16, Bernard here springs a surprise on the reader by offering a shortened version. The reader

for his part is supposed to recognise what the story is about within the split second of four words being uttered: *misit puerum, tulit baculum* (the *misit puerum* being faintly echoed in the *manus suas misit* in Sermon 16). In more than one sense this passage bears the hallmark of a *verbum abbreviatum*, an abbreviated word. We have seen this *verbum abbreviatum* at work in the analysis of the sermons *In nativitate*. Christ's incarnation was regarded as the immense and infinite Word of God, spoken in a comprehensible form, contracted to the size of a baby. At the same time this contraction was found to be mirrored, by way of imitation, in the brevity of Bernard's Christmas sermon. In Sermon 2 on the Song of Songs we now come across the same characteristics. The prophet comes down and contracts his body to the size of the dead boy. Just as in the Christmas sermons the concentrated rhetorical form of the story here causes the brevity to merge with the endless stream of the discourse; a discourse which, in turn, reflects unlimited as well as unfulfilled desire. As so often in Bernard's texts, the rhetorical level coincides with the actual subject-matter. As to this subject matter, the first part of the sermon which precedes the Elisha-story vividly depicts the patriarchs and prophets waiting for the coming of the Stranger. Retrospectively, their efforts to speed up the arrival of the Messiah become even more primitive when seen in the light of Christ's ultimate, glorious appearance symbolised by the *osculum oris*. How well intended those efforts look from the present point of view but how utterly inadequate and naive they were!

Every time I think of the burning desire of the fathers for the presence of Christ in the flesh, I am cut to the quick and feel bewildered. Just now I can hardly refrain from weeping, ashamed as I am by the lukewarmness and laziness of our wretched times.⁵ For in which of us is the grace offered at present capable of arousing so much joy as the promise of that grace had kindled the desire in the old saints? Behold, how many of you will rejoice in His nativity which is soon to be celebrated! O, that nativity might really be the issue! That is why that word (*vox ista*) *Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth* inspires in me the ardent desire of those historic men

⁵ For an interesting description of Bernard's view of the Church's history as a mixture of progress and degeneracy, see Olsen 1990.

and the affect of pious expectation. Anyone who in that period had the capacity to be spiritual felt in the spirit how great a grace would be poured out on those lips. For that reason, voicing the desire of his heart, he would say: *Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth*, wishing with all his power not to be barred from participating in so much sweetness.

For a perfect person might have said: 'What do I care for those streams of words uttered by the Prophets? I would much rather be kissed by the handsomest of men. *Let he himself kiss me with the kiss of his mouth*. I refuse to listen to Moses any longer for he suffers too much of a speech impediment. Isaiah's lips are unclean, Jeremiah does not know how to speak up because he is a young boy. In fact, all prophets are poor speakers. He himself, he whom they speak about, let himself speak. *Let he himself kiss me with the kiss of his mouth*. He speaks no longer to me in them or through them because they are 'a watery darkness, a dense cloud'. But *may he himself kiss me with the kiss of his mouth* whose gracious presence and streams of admirable teaching may turn me into a fountain rising up to life eternal. He has been anointed by the Father with the oil of gladness in preference to his peers. Is that not a reason why out of him affluent grace should be poured out on me, if he only holds me worthy of the *kiss of his mouth*? For to me his living and efficient word is a kiss, not so much a joining of the lips which sometimes belies the picture of peaceful co-existence of souls, but rather it is infusion of joy, revelation of secrets, in one way or another a miraculous and somehow seamless mingling of light from above with the illuminated mind. For he who adheres to God is one spirit. I therefore rightly refuse to accept any more visions and dreams, I do not want any more symbols and riddles. I even get tired of the pretty shapes of angels. My Jesus surpasses them in stature and beauty. I do not ask for anyone else, no angel, no man, but only for himself to *kiss me with the kiss of his mouth*.⁶ (SC 2 I 1-2)

⁶ For the influence of Origen in this passage, see Lubac 1959: 593 and Br  sard 1983: 51.

In this passage⁷ Bernard's monastic memory can be seen at work. However, the way it works is not simply a matter of remembering past events. The archetypal nucleus of the memory process is the text of the Canticle 'Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth'. This text being repeated over and over again turns into a magic ritual which awakens memories of an unfulfilled past. The remoter and the more unfulfilled the past appears to be, the more the *OSCULETUR ME OSCULO ORIS SUI* becomes projected into the future. In the meantime we are not supposed to forget for one moment—as part of the memory act—the majestic presence of the *osculum oris* in the person of 'the one mediator between God and man, the man Jesus', who dominates both past and future. 'For he is the peace between us, and has made the two into one.' Thus past, present and future are blended into one while retaining their distinct characteristics. The past becomes even more melancholy and the future even more unapproachable.

At the same time the presence of the beautiful and reconciliatory Jesus is matched by the presence of the bride. Ultimately, in terms of the Canticle, it is she who, through sheer stubbornness and refusal to wait any longer, brings about the kiss she was longing for. In that kiss she becomes one with the bridegroom: 'who adheres to God is one spirit.' But there can be no doubt as to who, on the rhetorical level, acts as the official representative of the bride. Repeating her very words and making them his own, Bernard once more positions himself there where the action is. First he opens his sermon with the Ciceronian detachment of someone who intends to write down the results of his frequent pondering ('every time I think of...').⁸ Next he rapidly moves into the monastic mode (*compungor, confundor, lacrimas*). Then sympathy with the fathers of old causes him to distance himself from his own present. The ineluctable presence of Christ in the monastic body, represented in the liturgical calendar, appears not to be fully appreciated by his fellow-monks. It will soon be Christmas, *sed utinam de nativitate!*/o, that Christmas might indeed be the object of concern! I shall return later to

⁷ For an analysis of this passage in the context of 'Word, text, and experience', see Stock 1983: 418–9.

⁸ Cf. *De oratore*, book I, I: 'Cogitanti mihi saepe numero...'; Sutton, Rackham: 2. For a literal quotation of this line, see the opening words of Scottus' *Periphyseon*: 'Saepe mihi cogitanti diligentiusque...'; Otten 1991: 221.

Bernard's comments on the monks' attitude toward the liturgical highlights and to the apparent necessity to have the latter's presence suspended. Here, quite evidently, the author's identification with the desire of the fathers entitles him not only to criticise the insouciance of his fellow-monks—that being part of his abbatial duty—but also, by moving into pre-historic times, to remove Christ temporarily—*Christo remoto*—for the sole purpose of calling Him back later for the kiss of life.

There follows a spectacular piece of theatre. *Dicebat enim perfectus quisque* 'a perfect person (might have) said...', the 'might have' being implied in the *quisque*. In other words, a hypothetical person, somebody having so ardent a desire as to cut right through the forest of 'historical', inadequate language, might have judged the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets for what they were. In fact, as everybody knows, in the days of old no such person was around. It is only with the blessing of hindsight that one can see through the poor performance of Christ's predecessors. Since in monastic memory 'hindsight' is identical with sight itself, the present orator can legitimately play the part of the *perfectus*. Thus there is a direct link between the hypothetical 'perfectionist' in the past who sees through the poor quality of the prophets' speech and the present performer who refuses to work any longer with visions, dreams, riddles and symbols (*figuras*/figures of speech). One is reminded not only of Anselm's *sola ratione*—I shall come back to that later—but also of Abelard's intellectual impatience with regard to his teachers. Bored by Anselm of Laon's circumventions in teaching the *sacra pagina*, he challenges his fellow-students to select an obscure text from a commentary on Ezechiel. Since he was not going to spend days in consulting other commentaries of the 'fathers', he invited his companions, much to their astonishment, to come to his lecture the following morning. Such is life if one works *non per usum sed per ingenium*.⁹ If Bernard subsequently accuses Abelard of 'having gone beyond the fathers' in his dialectical approach to Scripture—meaning, of course, the Church Fathers—he implicitly suggests his own case is resting on solid authority. And, indeed, authority it is. Only, Bernard's authority comes conspicuously close to Abelard's *ingenium*. For even if one mitigates the

⁹ *Historia calamitatum*; Monfrin: 68–9.

boldness of this passage about the poor rhetorical qualities of the prophets, pointing to the fact that Bernard is playfully using Scriptural material as a *figura* in the service of ardent devotion, it is still his own rhetorical inclusion in the biblical text that conditions his 'analysis' of Sacred Scripture. In fact, there is nothing underlying this *figura*, nothing except the reality of the *perfectus*. Just as Abelard penetrates Scripture through reason,¹⁰ so Bernard, cutting short visions, dreams, symbols and riddles, relies on his tropological flair and confidence. Ultimately, it is his incorporation in the *osculum* which bestows on him a desire as strong as that of the Old Testament fathers. At the same time, he himself being the object of the resurrecting kiss, he does not hesitate to identify with the one Perfect Man rising from the grave. Paradoxical though it may seem, the effect of the entire operation is extraordinarily historical. The application of one Old Testament text to another, the *OSCULETUR ME OSCULO ORIS SUI* to the languishing and flawed speech of the prophets, shows the latter as the remote figures they are. Like statues carved out of stone in the façades of a Romanesque church with their half-opened mouths forever caught in the attempt to speak, they represent desire at a moment that it is nothing more and nothing less.

Through the repetition of the *OSCULETUR ME OSCULO ORIS SUI* Bernard successfully underscores the point he wants to make. In doing so he gives yet another example of his cyclical and nuclear approach to language. The nucleus is, as we have seen, the *osculum*: the 'living and efficient word'. Its subsequent expansion in time and space is held together by the underlying *me*. As an external observer (*frequentissime cogitans*) who is based in his own self-contained and well-protected monastic environment, Bernard, that is, the *me* contained in the *osculum*, bewails the unfulfilled past, steps into the desire of the fathers and identifies with them while distancing himself from his own 'perfect' situation. He has the fathers speak up through the rhetorical figure of the *prosopopoeia* and returns to his former *me* by cutting through all circumventions. If this passage is striking through its emotional intensity caused by the author's

¹⁰ That is, in Bernard's account of Abelard's approach. In fact, the *Sic et non* method is much more modest.

incorporation in the kiss, it is no less so because of the intensity incurred by the element of distance and remoteness. In other words, if the longing for the kiss is significant, so is the necessity of delay, not only as past desire but also in the dramatisation of that past as present before the monastic audience.

As a result, this strong presence of the monastic *me* gives rise to a strange mixture of delay and fulfilment, of anticipation of the future and rumination about the past. There is, indeed, anticipation on the part of the fathers and prophets although it is doomed to fall short of its goal:

Moreover, on the one hand having the prophets foretell peace, on the other having the author of peace delay his coming, made the faithful hesitate, because there was no redeemer who would bring salvation. That is why men started to take offense at the delay since the Prince of Peace, though frequently announced, failed to arrive as had been predicted through the mouth of his holy prophets of old. And distrusting promises, they demanded a sign of the promised reconciliation, that is of the *kiss*, as if one of the crowd had spoken up: 'How long do you keep us in suspense? It is not for the first time that you have talked of peace, and it did not materialise. You promise good things, yet all there is is trouble. This is what the angels, on various occasions and in many different ways, have announced to our forefathers, and our fathers, in turn, have passed it on to us: 'Peace, they say, but there is no peace.' If God wishes me to be convinced of his good intentions so often stated by his delegates but never actually carried out, *let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth*, thus guaranteeing peace through the sign of peace. What reason do I have to believe in words? Rather, words need to be confirmed by deeds. Let God prove that his messengers are speaking the truth—supposing they really are his messengers—and may he himself, as they so often promised us, come right after those who were unable to do anything without him. He sent the boy, he carried the staff. I do not rise, I refuse to be resurrected, I do not arise from the dust, I do not breathe again for hope unless the prophet himself comes down and *kisses me with the kiss of his mouth*. (SC 2 III 5)

Here we once more witness the monastic memory at work: anticipation in the guise of rumination. From the author's point of view, anticipation is a process of remembering old stories. In that process Bernard imitates sacred history the nature of which can be summarized as *PAX, ET NON EST PAX*. If the sacred past is to be characterised by delay (*mora*), so is the author's narration. For we have seen how precisely the Elisha-story, once it had been told in its most succinct form, and, subsequently, forgotten, is used to justify rhetorical delay. It will become part of the ever expanding thread spun from the Song of Songs and take on enormous proportions, before once more being contracted by, and in, the *persona* of the author. Yet *pax* there is, as succinct as the quotation itself. The failing speech of the prophets, causing delay by its very nature, contributes to the build-up of the moment of Resurrection. Moses suffers from a speech impediment, the lips of Isaiah are unclean, and Jeremiah does not know how to speak up because he is a boy. Although it can never be proven, it does not defy the imagination to think that 'Jeremiah the boy' (*puer*) has acted as the associative gem sparking off the Elisha-story: *misit puerum*. And if that is too bold an assumption to make, we may wisely refer the matter to Bernard's own ignorance: 'Could I have foreseen the Elisha-story suddenly emerging?' However that may be, for a brief moment, the *puer* whose staff/*baculus* symbolizes delay, is yet another flawed prophet, contributing to the unwanted prolongation of unfulfilled history. In the following 'neither sound nor life' another *puer* is introduced, or, rather, not introduced. Dead though he is, he is the *perfectus* who embodies the ardent desire of the fathers and speaks up: *non surgo...* When, eventually, the prophet himself comes down to administer the kiss of life, it is not only the delay/*mora* of ancient times which is brilliantly transformed. As a *verbum abbreviatum* wrapped in the supreme incantation of the *OSCULETUR ME OSCULO ORIS SUI*, the Elisha-story itself is absorbed in the poetry of the Canticle 'never' to be remembered again.

2. *The tale of the angel: the Sermons on the Resurrection*

There is another reason why this particular resurrection has a special claim to fame. In the case of other resurrections, who has ever resurrected himself? It is beyond words that the same person who sleeps should set himself free from death; it is most exceptional, no one can do such a thing, no one but one. Elisha the prophet resuscitated one dead person, a different person though, not himself. Behold, how many years he has been lying in his grave since he was unable to raise himself from the dead, hoping for someone else, for him who in his own person triumphed over the rule of death. That is why we speak about others having been raised from the dead whereas Christ has risen. He alone came out of the grave as a victor on his own strength: that is another respect in which 'the Lion of Juda has triumphed'. (Res 1 7)

Such proved to be the delights of research in the pharmacy of the Holy Spirit: *sic vivitur, et in talibus vita spiritus meus*. The surprise about his own 'accidental' discovery of the Elisha-story in Sermon 16 on the Song of Songs, long after he had introduced it in Sermon 2, coincided with Bernard's capacity as author of being the object of divine visitation. The loosely connected members of his own, dead body were to be contracted by the prophet's lying down on it. The passivity of the dead boy being identical with the literary act of resurrection from the dead on the part of the writer caused both story and explanation to come full circle.

Now in another *coup de théâtre* the same author declares that very same story to be lacking in power: it is not simple, not transparent enough. Miraculous though Elisha's kiss of life may have been, it suffers from one conspicuous draw-back: there are two persons involved, and that is one too many. In other words, Bernard requires resurrection, in order to live up to its name, to be autonomous, self-sufficient and absolutely simple. Help from the outside, be it in the shape of another object to be raised or a subject to arise, would make but a poor performance. For a truly unique and powerful event to be realised, both the one who raises and the one to rise ought to be one and the same person. This maximalist claim with regard to the quality of resurrection reminds one of the technique used by Anselm of Canterbury in his *Proslogion*. In it

Anselm undertakes to prove the existence of God by means of one, single argument, *unum argumentum*. In order to match the definition of God as truly one, the argumentation for his existence is not permitted to come to a halt at the possibility of God existing in the intellect alone, *in solo intellectu*. Rather it should proceed to a more simple option in which all other possibilities are excluded: the existence of God both in the intellect and in reality, *in intellectu* and *in re*. It is only in the completion of this rational course that the argument (i.e. the *id quo nihil maius cogitari potest*) proves itself truly and most economically to be, and thereby to be one. In a similar way Bernard proposes to produce a more simple and powerful model of coming to life: auto-resurrection. However, since Bernard has made himself part of the Elisha-story, one might ask—bearing in mind the comparison with Anselm's logical approach—if his demand for auto-resurrection implies auto-description as well. Does he have the audacity, after dismissing the inadequate imagery of the Elisha-story which was previously used to symbolize fulfilment, to join in this new rhetorical bid for performative accuracy?

Here we come across the problems we have hinted at in the Introduction to the Chapter on Resurrection. Admittedly, with regard to other highlights in the Christian calendar, for example Christmas, Bernard displays considerable boldness. In the sermons *In nativitate* he had managed to condense basic facts from the life of Christ such as the Nativity and the Passion, into the image of a fountain, into water streaming from the side of Christ crucified. This fluidity, in turn, had become 'frozen' in the shape of gems hidden in the bags of Joseph's brothers. However, as far as the Resurrection is concerned, such a rhetorical move would seem to be blocked by its very shapelessness. Unlike the Nativity or the Passion, the Resurrection does not contain dramatic elements which might be made more transparent through a rhetorical process. As it is, the Resurrection is overly transparent: it is basically empty. Consequently, it bears little description in intrinsically narrative terms. In the absence of witnesses to the scene there is no story to be told—at least no better story than the Elisha one—no memory to appeal to and, therefore, no dramatisation with which to recall and reshape the event.

Faced with such formidable barriers, what is Bernard's aim in trying to give an adequate account of the Resurrection? First, of

course, it is a matter of faith. Resurrection being central, it is out of the question for faith not to account for—*rationem reddere*—its implications. Second, Bernard's concept of mystical tropology demands participation to the very end. There is no reason to abandon the effort when the going gets rough. Third, and most importantly, Bernard's literary performance of the mystical tropology is not supposed to end once it touches upon its own *principe moteur*. Thus far we have described the process of Bernardine image-production and of image-reduction, without having succeeded in grasping the driving force behind his literary reconstruction of the events. All we have seen, as, for instance, in the sermons *In nativitate*, is an increasing transparency of the discourse, Christ's nativity kaleidoscopically being transformed into his suffering. In view of the title given to the first sermon *In nativitate: De quinque fontibus*/'The five fountains', the life of Christ might be seen as a water stream. But where does this stream flow, which, in monastic terms, is almost the same as asking: whence does it spring?

Just as faith is centred in the dynamics of the Resurrection, so there is reason to suppose that for Bernard the literary imitation of the Resurrection lies at the core of his own principles of rhetorical organisation. Ultimately, it is here that the *verbum abbreviatum* is coined, for it is here that it is uttered in its most abridged form. So, as to previous literary attempts of resurrection such as the Elisha-story, it should be noted that they make perfect sense as they stand. Yet a more spiritual rendering of the event—based on a further simplification and contraction—which meets the demands of adequacy, is required by the very nature of the Resurrection itself. Thinner air and more transparent fluidity underlie the event which governs all other events as well as the logic of their narration.

The setting of the first of Bernard's four sermons *In resurrectione* is marked by a confident tone:

Vicit Leo de tribu Iuda./The Lion from the tribe of Juda has triumphed.

This majestic opening presents a display of divine power from the cross. Against the mocking request by the Jews who challenge

Christ to come down from the cross, its royal splendour is emphasized in a poetic reminder of Venantius Fortunatus' *Vexilla regis*:

Dominus regnavit a ligno/the Lord has reigned from the wood.
Wisdom has been victorious over malice, striking forcefully throughout and ordering all things sweetly, *sed pro me fortiter, suaviter mihi*/for me forcefully, sweetly for me. (Res 1 1)

The Lion of Juda-theme taken from the Apocalypse is elaborated and adorned by means of neighbouring words and expressions from the same passage:

Vicit Leo de tribu Iuda, radix David/the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the root of David has prevailed to open the book, and to loosen the seven seals thereof (Rev. 5,5)...And I saw, John says, in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book sealed with seven seals (Rev. 5,1)...And I wept much, he says, because no man was able to open the book (Rev. 5,4) And one of the elders said to me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of Juda...And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain...(Rev. 5,6). (Res 1 10)

The appearance of the Lamb introduces an element of tenderness: the lion is the meek lamb, victory has come after suffering. Thus the story alternates between the *fortiter* and the *suaviter*, not only on the part of the Lamb but also on the part of those who witnessed the events at the time. For right through this victorious scene—though still within the framework of the Apocalypse, cf. 'a Lamb as it had been slain'—the spotlight falls upon the bystanders at the crucifixion. Here triumph is more than countered by sweetness: it vanishes into utter despair. In a remarkable *husteron proteron* Bernard transforms the tears which John of the Apocalypse shed because of his inability to open the book, into the tears of John and Mary as they were standing at the foot of the cross:

Do not weep any longer, John, and Mary, you too, stop weeping. Let mourning cease, the cloud of sadness be dissolved. (Res 1 12)

In another *husteron proteron* preceding the one just mentioned, the book-theme taken from the Apocalypse (applied to the desperate disciples standing at the foot of the cross) appears to have been extended to the scene of the sealed tomb:

The grave also closed this book. And there has never been a symbol which in such a manner bound together and hid a great mystery of faith. The Lord being buried, all that seemed to be left for the disciples themselves was despair so intense as to make them say: 'We did have hope.' Who then would not weep at such a time about the book being closed since there is no one there to open it? (Res 1 11)

Fortiter and *suaviter*. As in the sermons *In nativitate* the power and the glory of Christ's triumphant actions are met with tenderness. In a sense royal glitter—and that is what the *fortiter* is about—is not absent: the Lion of Juda has been victorious. And in the title given to an alternative version of Sermon 1 *In resurrectione* jewelry is hinted at: *De quattuor gemmis crucis et de septem signaculis libri signati*. Yet at the same time, just as in the sermons *In nativitate*, this powerful display of clear-cut imagery is mellowed both on an affective/emotional and on a rhetorical level. The meeker aspects of the events surrounding Christ (the *suaviter*) present themselves, as they creep into the train of Bernard's thought and language. In the end, this process of mollification turns out to be used for the purpose of breaking down a stone in the shape of the tomb which, in turn, tropologically, has the shape of the human heart. So, invisible lines connect the victorious Christ through his own past suffering with the desperation and tears of the onlookers, and with the experience of the reader. Thus in accordance with the laws of mystical tropology involvement of the reader/onlooker in the cluster of sacred events described by Bernard is implied all along.

In pursuing our attempt to describe the *principe moteur* behind this fast moving set of images, we should keep in mind the scene of John weeping at the foot of the cross, linked to John of the Apocalypse weeping because of his fundamental inability to open the book with the seven seals. It is this *claustrum* of the book which, at least in our tentative reconstruction of Bernard's discourse, is at the end of the fluid line of images and as such behind the dramatic scene of persons weeping at the foot of the cross just

as in the sermons *In nativitate* it proved to be behind the tears of the child in the manger.

In Sermon 1 the *compositio loci*, consisting of the description of the closed tomb including the reaction of its visitors to that situation, is more or less embedded in the dynamics lent to the sermon by continuous references to the Apocalypse.

The Lion of Juda has triumphed. The whelp of the Lion has been resurrected by the paternal voice. He who did not come down from the wood came forward out of the closed tomb. Let our enemies judge who so curiously fortified the monument, sealing the stone with custodians. That enormous stone that those pious women were looking for was removed by the Angel after the Lord had already risen and, so Scripture says, the Angel sat on it. Therefore the revived body no doubt came out of the closed tomb. That very same body has come to life out of the closed womb of the Virgin and entered the conclave of the disciples through closed doors. But there is a place from behind the closed doors of which he did not want to come: the gaol of hell. He has broken down the iron gates, destroyed all its bars in order safely to bring out his people whom he had redeemed from the hand of the enemy, that the crowds dressed in white who had washed their clothes and made them whiter in the blood of the Lamb, might come out of the crowded gates. And he who has seen testifies. (Res 1 5)

The degree to which this passage on Resurrection is dramatized by means of additions and ornamentations from the Apocalypse—*Leo vicit, agmina dealbatorum, laverunt stolas, sanguis Agni*—becomes even more evident when compared with an abridged version of the same sermon. Even though that version is headed by the same *vicit Leo de Iuda*, the specific passage on the closed tomb is unadorned as far as Apocalyptic influence is concerned. Bernard simply considers the question whether or not, in view of the absence of witnesses, it is legitimate to claim knowledge of Christ's appearance from the closed tomb. If one sticks to the facts, the information one really has is rather scarce:

Yesterday you have heard that an earthquake occurred to the sacred women while on their way to the grave and the Angel

came down from heaven and overturned the stone from Him whom they were bewailing, and sat on it. And he told them that he whom they were looking for was not there. He had already risen. (Res 1 6)

Next the Jews are told that this resurrection qualifies as a greater miracle than the hypothetical event of Jesus meeting their request to come down from the cross. Bernard continues to deal with the unique nature of this Resurrection. Former attempts failed since never ever had forerunners such as Elisha been able to resurrect themselves.

In comparison with the longer version the brevity of this passage is telling. It looks as if the insertions from the Apocalypse in the long text are an attempt to fill us in on the desolation caused by the monumental *claustrum*. The timid *forte quaeritis unde id scio*/'you might wonder where I get my information from'—in the short text here seems to be transformed and, more or less, materialised in the testimony of John the Seer: *Et testimonium perhibet ipse qui vidit*/and he who has seen testifies. Surpassing the traditional analogies of the tomb as the aforesaid womb of Mary the almost esoteric language of the Apocalypse creates a visionary setting of blood and white clothes being washed in it. As with a stone thrown into a pond further dimensions of this imagery come to the surface. The white clothes, echoing the *DILECTUS MEUS CANDIDUS ET RUBICUNDUS, ELECTUS EX MILLIBUS*/'My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand'—from the Song of Songs (Cant. 5,10) hint at what might have been going on inside the *claustrum* of the grave precisely when the bridegroom was about to leave for the fields/Galilee.

Yet the quasi-confident use of Apocalyptic information also brings to the fore the problematic aspects of the Resurrection story. In terms of the narrative both the women and the disciples, though hurrying towards the tomb, failed to arrive in time to be direct witnesses of the actual Resurrection. All one has to go by is the account given by the Angel of an event *qui vient d'arriver*: the Lord has risen and gone from where he had been laid to rest. In consequence, the author who tries to re-tell the story in a more or less adequate fashion faces considerable problems. How should we describe what has been going on inside the *claustrum*? A further complication arises if one takes note of the fact that the author's

story is meant to include his own tropological imitation of the event alongside that of others. From Nativity to Passion it is quite possible to follow the stages of Christ's life, take them in and thus turn the story into imitative behaviour. Resurrection, however, looks too formidable and inaccessible an event to be appropriated in a direct way, or even to be referred to as a shining example. Of a more 'enclosed' nature than the other stages of Christ's life it seems to deprive the narrator of his plot, suspense and happy ending.

I will return to this set of problems later. For the time being I want to point out how Bernard, in accordance with the monastic setting, describes the effect of the Resurrection on the believer. The focus is on penitence by way of the bearing of the cross.

After two days he will bring us back to life, on the third day he will raise us from the dead. (Os 6, 3; Res 1 8)

The tropological application of Christ's death and Resurrection to (monastic) life is most conspicuous in the shorter version of the sermon:

The same goes for us. If we are truly his members, if we want to follow our head, let us persevere on the first day, i.e. as long as we are in the mortal flesh, on the cross of our penitence...If that day has been brought to a happy end, we shall be on the second day which is after death, in the tomb, sleeping in it in peace, resting from all our works...On the third day we shall rise to be in glory and eternal life for ever. (Res 1 8)

In the longer version these separate phases of the three days are concentrated and intensified in the penitential bearing of the cross:

Let us persist on the cross, let us die on the cross...Let us sweetly rest on the second day, sleep happily in the tomb, expecting blessed hope and the coming of the glory of the Lord who will raise our bodies from the dead on the third day to incorporate them in the body of his clarity. (Res 1 8)

Inside the framework of mystical tropology it is difficult to tell how seriously temporal distinctions should be taken. Of course, *post mortem* in a literal sense means: the moment after physical death. The monastic community too lives in expectation of the resurrection of the flesh which will materialize at a given moment in the future.

The fluid nature, however, of Christ's progression on earth, linked to the flexible use which the imitating monk can make of it, brings back the slumber of death and the hope for future resurrection within the other *monumentum claustrum*, i.e. within the walls of the monastery. At the end of Sermon 1 *In resurrectione* Bernard draws the logical conclusion from his tropological-penitential reading of sacred events. Bearing the cross to the very end results for the monk to a form of co-resurrection with Christ beyond the limits of death in the soul yet still within the limits of the present life.

Whosoever, after penitential lamentations, does not return to carnal consolations but puts his trust in divine commiseration and takes up a new devotion and joy in the Holy Spirit, and rather than feeling compunction by remembering past sins, enjoys memory and is kindled by desire for eternal rewards, such a man clearly rises with Christ, celebrating Easter, hurrying to Galilee. You then, beloved, 'if you have risen together with Christ, look for what is above, not for what is on earth' that, just as Christ has risen from the dead through the glory of the Father, you too may walk in the newness of life, that you may transfer your joy from worldly pleasure and consolation, through compunction and sadness which is according to God, to holy and spiritual devotion, under the guidance of him who went out of this world to the Father, deigning to draw us behind him and to call us to Galilee, in order to reveal himself to us. He is God beyond everything. (Res 1 18)

Now as to the way in which Bernard has construed this series of *Sermones in resurrectione* we cannot pass a definite judgment. Even if they were meant to be read as a more or less coherent collection, it still remains possible to consider each sermon in its own right. In that respect the end of Sermon 1, just quoted, is quite satisfactory. The emotions of the audience are heightened so as to offer them the opportunity to participate tropologically in the Resurrection of Christ by bearing the cross to the very end. Lightness is introduced into this penitential scene by the dynamic movements of Christ, the original bearer of the cross. Christ has successfully put the episode of the cross behind him, he has risen from the dead and gone on to Galilee.

If we further notice that the very same end-passage of Sermon 1 contains elements which can be seen as seeds from which themes in the following sermons spring, we do not need a causal connection to explain this continuity. Bernard's discourse does not always develop according to the laws of linearity. Thus there is no reason to be surprised if the same words and motives occur in different places in different configurations, often with slightly different meanings.

The Elisha-story, for example, though applied to the one theme of Resurrection, turned out to serve different purposes. In its first appearance, in the Sermons on the Song of Songs, it symbolised the finality of Christ's coming after the failed attempts of his predecessors (*donec propheta ipse descendat*), in the second the inadequacy of its own typological meaning (the resurrection of Christ, though foreshadowed by other resurrections, being more complete and perfect than the 'primitive' resurrection of the boy through the kisses of Elisha). If we consider the second version, i.e. the inadequacy of the Elisha-story, to be a correction of the earlier one, we ought to realise that for Bernard the two may have been quite unconnected. However, in our search for a *principe moteur* governing Bernard's texts, we intend to imitate Bernard's own endeavour in using the second version in order to bring about the simplicity of the Resurrection which was lacking in the first.¹¹ Given that, the reader, in the absence of the continuity of a linear narrative, is thus left to the literary/devotional task of 'reconstruction'. From that point of view the end of Sermon 1 can justifiably be seen to foreshadow what is about to happen in the following ones. The Apocalyptic washing of the cloths in the blood of the Lamb reappears in Sermon 3 in the guise of the baptism of Naaman, the Syrian, in the water of the Jordan. Penitence, consolation, divine mercy and a new devotion are condensed into the final Resurrection scene at the end of Sermon 2, as are the delights of memory. The Holy Spirit figures in Sermon 4, in a recapitulation of all Resurrection-related aspects of the monastic life. In it the monks are pictured as the Apostles in Acts 2 waiting in the upper room—in con-

¹¹ Of course, there is no evidence of a real link between the sermons in which the Elisha-story on the one hand and the Resurrection-scene proper on the other are discussed. All Bernard does here is referring to the story from the second Book of Kings.

clave—for the coming of the Spirit. Even sadness, *tristitia*, is not absent, underlying as it does the joy of a new devotion, *devotio nova*, in the picture of the monk, highspirited and awaiting the final triumph of the Lord, who goes back to his old penitential occupation of weeping, and, more generally, to the celebration of life as an endless repetition of liturgical activities.¹² ‘Galilee,’ so conspicuously present at the end of Sermon 1, does not return verbally although its dynamics are preserved in the scene of the Apostles in Sermon 4, not only waiting for the coming of the Spirit but also ready to ‘hit the road of superior love’. Even more subtly do the echoes of disappearance sound at the end of Sermon 2 whose closing words: *venite, et videte locum, ubi positus erat Dominus* ‘come and look where the Lord was laid to rest’, suspend and leave the answer to the question where the Lord has gone to the reader’s imagination. The use of the past tense, *erat*, in which Christ’s presence in the *monumentum claustrum* is set, presents a new drama, and, consequently, a *nova devotio*, which needs to be explained. The finality of sacred events in the Resurrection, and, imitation-wise, the finality of their literary representation, seems to be scattered by the information the reader remembers from Sermon 1: Christ’s breaking out of the tomb and his disappearance to Galilee from the place in which he was laid to rest. Like the shepherd/bridegroom from the Canticle, he draws us/*nos*, i.e. the flock of faithful behind him, out of the confinements of devotional and narrative space. The task which lies ahead for us is—to reformulate what we said in the introduction to this chapter—to observe how Bernard explains the empty and imageless scene of the *monumentum claustrum* (the *venite, et videte locum, ubi positus erat Dominus*) while doing justice to its light and dramatic, Canticle-like dynamics. To put it the other way around, to observe how Bernard describes the light and dramatic, Canticle-like dynamics of the scene while doing justice to the empty and imageless nature of the *monumentum claustrum*.

The wildness of the Resurrection scene in Sermon 1 *In resurrectione*, intensified by the Apocalyptic ornamentations, suddenly disappears in Sermon 2. Just as in Sermon 1 Bernard had reduced

¹² See the second paragraph of Chapter Nine: *Tristes tropiques*.

the Elisha-story to its bare essentials, turning a success-story (resurrection of the dead boy) into a failure (no auto-resurrection), so he here evokes Resurrection in its most economical form: death being exchanged for life. If there is an element of the *Apocalypsis cum figuris* left, it might be found in the hazy figures of the women at early dawn running to the grave only to find it empty. Even in the lengthy technical/allegorical exegesis of the spices and the money carried by the women in terms of affection, zeal of justice etc., Bernard closely follows the story and does not yield, as in so many other places, to the temptation of further amplification. At the end of the sermon we find him once more depicting the Resurrection scene in a dramatisation which is unique by its lightness and liveliness as well as by its mysteriousness. As to the *mise-en-scène*, one is reminded of the early sequence:

*Dic nobis Maria
quod vidisti in via?*¹³

The opening-lines of Sermon 2 do indeed display a certain strictness: brevity. In a staccato-like *cadenza* Bernard sketches the outlines of the Resurrection scene. There is no amplification here, no way out of the story. The logic of the situation is as compelling as a syllogism:

We have learnt from the Apostle that it is through faith that Christ dwells in our hearts. Consequently, it does not seem wide off the mark if one takes this to mean that Christ lives in us as long as faith is alive. But after faith has died, there is a sense in which Christ has died in us. Further, works testify to the life of faith as is written: 'The works which the Father has given me, testify about me.' Nor does it seem incongruent with this state of affairs to hold that faith is dead in itself when it is without works. Just as we know the life of this body from its movements, so we know the life of faith from good works. Therefore, the soul is the life of the body through which it is moved and through which it feels. But the life of faith is love because it works through love as you read in the Apostle: 'Faith which works through love.' That is why, if love cools off, faith dies, just as when the soul leaves the body. But if

¹³ Raby 1959: 184.

you see a man live, strong in good works and happily glowing in 'conversation' (*fervore conversationis hilarem*), do not doubt that there is faith in him since you have before you the firm proofs of his being alive. (Res 2 1)

One of the most remarkable features of this passage is its emotional vigour. How is it achieved? No doubt the suggestive evocation of body and soul—death being in the air if the soul retreats—coupled with faith and love, heighten the emotional effect. Good works are far from having a moralistic ring about them. Rather, counterpointing the horror which would result from their failure to be effective, they refer to the life of faith as living dangerously. The *hilaritas*/joy which marks the man who succeeds in living such a life, mirrors the monastic setting which is supposed to embody faith operational: the continuous presence of love. The most disturbing effect of this passage results, however, from the logical deduction that not only Christ lives in us as long as there is faith but also that, if we take the argument one step further, if faith is dead, Christ dies in us. Once again one is reminded of Anselm who in his *Cur deus homo* faces similar problems when dealing with the *Christo remoto*.¹⁴ Just as there is no point in mitigating the audacity of Anselm's removal of Christ from the dialectical process by claiming the continuous presence of faith, it is not helpful to save Christ's presence here by the reassurance that his disappearance is nothing but a tropological move within a firm, religious framework. There is no reason whatsoever to underestimate the literalness of the monastic performance. Accordingly, the imitation of the empty tomb and Christ's disappearance had better produce real emptiness and real absence.

The imaginary death of Christ in the soul might be seen as the drawing of a bottom-line in a sophisticated literary-monastic game. The sophistication lies mainly in the fact that Bernard takes a minute step outside the liturgical-mechanical environment in which he is living and where Christ, in the ritual of prayer and singing, is born and raised from the dead over and over again. All of a sudden that familiar process is interrupted and turns out to be not so mechanical after all. Rather, it is the playfield of human liberty, in exegetical terms, the *sensus moralis*, that is, the opportunity for

¹⁴ *Cur deus homo*, preface; Schmitt II: 42–3.

good works. However, at this very point where human endeavour seems to count and where, consequently, one seems to be far removed from auto-resurrection, Bernard touches upon an atomic element which underlies and precedes the very moment of (auto-) resurrection, namely death. If one insists, it is possible to discern in the proclamation of death the connotation of resurrection. Liturgically speaking, the latter inevitably succeeds the former. But that is not how tropological drama operates. For the time being all that counts is the tragedy of death:

Mors et vita duello, conflixere mirando.

Death and life have met in a miraculous duel.¹⁵

This death in the soul is not unlike the bottom-line drawn in the *De gradibus superbiae et humilitatis*. Our reading of that treatise has shown how the proud and sinful monk who has gone downhill all the way has exiled himself from the monastic community. He is beyond correction and thus, so it seems, beyond salvation.

I have described as dead the man who, defending his sins, has rushed down to the eighth step. For the dead do not make confession, any more than someone who does not exist. After the tenth step, which is the third from the eighth, he is already swept away by freedom to sin, when he is driven out of the community of the monastery. But when he has gone on to the fourth step after that eighth one, now truly he is said to be four days dead, when, slipping into the fifth stage, he is buried in habitual sin. (Hum XXII 55; transl. Evans 1987: 142)

In accordance with the opinion of the Apostle John prayers for his return from the realm of death are no longer allowed.

But, surely, Apostle, you are not counselling despair? He who really loves him will still sigh. Let him not presume to pray nor cease to weep. What am I saying? If there remains any refuge of hope, is there not a place for prayer? But hear one who believes, hopes, yet does not pray, 'Lord,' she said, 'if you had been here my brother would not have died...' (Hum XXII 52; transl. Evans 1987: 139)

¹⁵ Raby 1959: 184.

It is the special quality of utter sadness, symbolized, for instance, in the tears of Mary and Martha at the grave of their brother Lazarus or, for that matter, in the tears of John and Mary at the foot of the cross, which creates room for the impossible. Auto-resurrection originates in the zeropoint of human and divine existence. By its very nature it is hard to tell if this zeropoint is located inside or outside the monastic community. Applying the *ordo meae descensionis* to himself in a tropological way, Bernard has excommunicated himself from his own monastic surroundings. He who had appropriated the life of Christ has by the same token withdrawn from the salutary mechanics of his own existence and identified himself with the outcast. As from a distance, he hears the murmur of the ongoing monastic prayer and singing which cannot be stopped anyway. Surely, if only he had been there, this death would not have occurred just as Lazarus would not have died if Christ had been on the spot to prevent it. As it is, the dead monk in the *De gradibus* and the death of faith in Sermon 2 *In resurrectione*, both being equally in need of resurrection, evoke similar moments of absence and suspense. Both sinner and saviour having gone, the one downward in *descensio* and the other upward in *ascensio*, all that remains is the mystery of an empty tomb.

In a final episode at the end of the sermon in which Bernard's evocation of Resurrection finds its most daring expression, it becomes clear how serious his tropological discussion about the death of faith at the beginning of the sermon really was. After all, this kind of death appears to be the solid stone-like substrate of the ultimate manifestation of life.

Having elaborated on the spices carried by the women on their way to the grave in a rather traditional manner, Bernard once more brings together all the elements belonging to the Resurrection scene:

Porro haec est manus aromata nummo subiectionis emuntur. Haec est enim quae dirigit gressus nostros et sanctae conversationis gratiam promeretur. Nam si contraria lex inventa est in membris nostris per inoboedientiam, quis nesciat per oboedientiam continentiam dari? Ipsa quoque est quae misericordiam ordinare novit, ipsa quae patientiam et donat. Cum his aromatibus accede ad eum, in quo fides mortua est. Verum si consideremus quam magnum sit ad nos suscitare eum

qui eiusmodi est, quam difficile sit vel accedere ad cor eius, quod lapidea quaedam obstinatio et impudentia clausit, puto quod dicere habeamus et nos: QUI REVOLVET NOBIS LAPIDEM AB OSTIO MONUMENTI? Attamen dum sic trepidi veremur accedere, cunctantes ad tam grande miraculum, fit nonnumquam ut, solita pietate, praeparationem cordis nostri audiat auris divina, et ad vocem virtutis illius, resurget qui erat mortuus. Et ecce Angelus Domini, hilaritas quaedam in vultu illius, tamquam in ostio monumenti nobis apparet, et fulgor quidam index resurrectionis, ut aperte videatur facies illius immutata, accessum praebens nobis ad cor suum, immo et advocans, ipsumque obstinationis suae revolvens lapidem, et sedens super eum, ita ut, suscitata fide ipsa, etiam lintheamina, quibus obvoluta fuerat, ipse demonstret. Dumque omnia quae in corde suo prius actibantur aperit, et confitetur quomodo seipsum sepelierat intus, ipsam tepiditatem et negligentiam suam prodens: VENITE, inquit, ET VIDETE LOCUM, UBI POSITUS ERAT DOMINUS. /Indeed, those spices of the hand are bought with the money of subjection. For subjection directs our steps and earns us the grace of conversion. For if a contrary law is found in our members through disobedience, who does not know that continence is the gift of obedience? It is she who knows how to set in order mercy, she who teaches and bestows patience. Approach then with those spices him in whom faith has died. Truly, if we consider the nature of our undertaking to raise him who is in such a state and realise how difficult it is for us to come near his heart which is closed off through a certain stone-like obstinacy and impudence, then I think we too may say: 'Who will roll back this stone from the opening of the monument?' And yet when we thus fear to come near in trepidation, hesitating before so great a miracle, it sometimes happens that the divine ear, loyal as always, hears the preparation of our heart and, on catching the sound of his strength, he who was dead rises. And, behold, the Angel of the Lord, with a joyful smile on his face, appears to us as at the opening of the monument. His is a kind of brightness as an indication of resurrection, suggesting his looks clearly having changed. He offers us access to his heart, yea, he also invites us, rolling back the very stone of his obstinacy, and, sitting on

it, so as to show us, after faith has been raised from the dead, the shrouds in which it had been wrapped. And as he reveals all the previous agitations of his heart he also confesses how he had buried himself within, and admitting to his own tepidity and negligence he says: 'Come and see the place where the Lord was laid to rest'. (Res 2 12)

Dirigit gressus nostros. In a very Bernardine move the stage is set by the use of just a couple of words. At the same time there is the suggestion of movement. Before anything is known with regard to the identity of the actors, a sense of speed and dynamics is impressed on the spectator. All he sees is the running of hazy figures at early dawn. Whatever will happen in the following lines, will be on the move dynamically. Even the stability of places (the tomb) and the identity of persons (Christ, the women, the angel) will become undermined by a continuation of coming and going (*gressus nostros*). The only sense of direction (*dirigit*) discernible in this process is the invisible hand of divine power (auto-resurrection) which simultaneously draws and effaces the lines of the picture.

A first indication of this technique as applied to the various persons involved is the introduction of a split identity, the Pauline *lex contraria in membris nostris*. This resistance against the order of divine mercy which brings the women running to the grave to a temporary halt is countered by (monastic) virtues: obedience and patience. In the concentrated shape of the spices carried by the women, those virtues find themselves confronted with 'him in whom faith has died'.

So far nothing unusual is found in the setting of the Easter-scene. As it is, it does not show traces which do not fit in with the basic structure of the *Victimae paschali*: women running to the grave.

Then suddenly the dramatic sequence is undercut, the supporting roles suspended and the distance between the person in the tomb—who at this stage is supposed to be still inside—and the participants eliminated. What seemed to be but a possibility in the opening lines of the sermon—faith may die—has turned into reality. In terms of the narrative, that means that faith has been deprived of its normal role of being, whatever the assistance of divine grace, the stronghold of the believing subject in his relation to God. Instead faith evaporates into the tropological narrative. From a tropological

point of view, information with regard to faith other than that it is alive or dead is just an undesired extension. To do justice to the strictness and to the economy of the tropological argument as Bernard had expressed it at the beginning of the sermon, faith has to be reduced to the size of the Resurrection-story: it has to die.

'How difficult it is for us to raise him who is in such a position, how difficult to approach his heart, stony and closed off in obstinacy and impudence.' What is the identity of him/*eum*? First and foremost, *qui eiusmodi est*, the tropological actor, the monk, the author or anyone in whom faith has died and who faces the *festin de pierre*. However, once these possibilities have again been reduced to the narrative, the logic of the opening argument allows for but one identification: it is Christ himself and no one else who has died. He keeps his part of the deal in which the identification of the believer with his divine object was sealed, and turns into stone. This is the delicate moment when resurrection as an external act becomes auto-resurrection in the heart of the believer as well as in the further unfolding of the narrative. Faced with the utter impossibility of removing the stone from the opening of the grave, the believer appears to have made an unnoticed leap in identity. Literally speaking, the women are the ones who admit to being unable to move the stone, let alone to be able to raise themselves or someone else from the dead. However, in Bernard's rendering of the story an invisible hand draws the supporting cast of the scene to the centre, i.e. the women approaching in trepidation the dead man in the tomb. Through their inability to remove the stone they acknowledge that they are the actual owners of the heart of stone. They are the ones who are in need of resurrection and, as a result, they become its object. But in accordance with Bernard's demands regarding the quality of the narrative, to be the object implies being the subject as well. Otherwise the one and only Resurrection of Christ would not be exclusive and automatic. So, the outside is turned into the inside, the disbelief of the bystanders becomes identical with the stone closing off the grave. In the meantime Bernard subtly shifts the story from him who was lying dead in the grave to the stone, thus preparing the way for the discovery of the empty tomb. The separation caused by the stone is suspended for the duration of the radical moment in which stony death changes into life.

'*Fit nonnumquam*/it sometimes so happens that the divine voice, loyal as always, hears the preparation of his heart and, on catching the strength of his voice, he who was dead rises.' To make the topological story complete, the trepidation with which one approaches the dead man in the grave appears to coincide with the first phase of the mollification of the stony heart. Clearly, it is only within the context of the monastic *claustrum* that such a coincidence of fear (*timor*, i.e. the beginning of the monastic *scala*), trepidation, death and the power of the divine voice makes sense. The insensitivity of the dead man on the one hand, and the sensitivity of the approaching women on the other, are two sides of the same coin. Since they eventually make for one and the same topological person, there is no real distance between their own trepidation, their sleep of death and the divine voice. Within the narrow bounds of the tomb the *grande miraculum* of (auto-)resurrection is performed on the very same person who possesses the power to rise.

So much for the story of the Resurrection. But who was the narrator? How much is left of him after the bystanders in his story who, however indirectly, need to be relied upon for information, have become absorbed by the centripetal power of the event? Was he able to resist the attraction to move toward that zero-point and keep his distance? On the other hand, we have not yet fully dealt with the question to which degree auto-resurrection implies auto-description as well. How are the conflicting elements of the narrative distance and the exclusive and simple nature of the event described to be reconciled?

In an acrobatic *tour de force* Bernard accomplishes the impossible. He turns to the only witness of the Resurrection scene, the witness who also gave the women their information: the angel, and makes him give his version of what really happened. For in spite of the momentous impact of the Resurrection described as the coming to life of the dead man as soon as the divine ear hears his mute voice, it is not the real story. The central and final event of Christian faith has never been told as it really happened. For the simple reason that even the prime witness, the angel, has not been directly involved in the event, it can never be retold in a straight way. 'Oblique' is the key-word in this situation with regard to the religious, the topological as well as the narrative structure of the

story. On the other hand, as for the question of what really happened, the account of the angel is all we have to go by: *testimonium perhibet qui vidit*.

The angel, for his part, seems to consider the whole affair a tremendous joke. With a smile of joy on his face (*hilaritas*), sitting on the stone which was between us, himself and the dead Christ, he tells as much as we need to know: the tomb is empty, Christ has gone. In the latter's absence it is the angel who does the honours not only by telling but also by reenacting what happened. Once more barriers of identity are broken down and the different persons dancing around the grave contracted into one single person. What seemed to be impossible after the tropological identification of Christ with the faithful/faithless is now realised in the angel's narration. Behind and beyond the figure of Christ himself whose auto-resurrection is supposed to mark reality once and for all, the contours of yet another person dawn: the angelic narrator of the story. The latter absorbs all that we have been through. His was the obstinacy, the heart of stone, it was he who revolved the stone from his own grave and it is he who sits on it. In the stumbling, 'oblique' grammar appropriate to the occasion: *et ecce Angelus domini, hilaritas quaedam in vultu illius, apparet et fulgor quidam index resurrectionis*, his is the reflected splendour of what had been going on inside. He had buried himself deep inside himself, but he too has his faith, tepid and negligent, resurrected.

What the story eventually comes down to is a gesture rather than a narration. 'There are such things in life, one can but point to, and pass by.' All the angel does is point to the shroud in which his faith, i.e. the story of his own stony, resurrected self, had been wrapped. That is all the angel can tell. The mysterious figure whom he represents and who was at the centre of this whole affair, i.e. of this tropological identity-game, although still almost tangible, has gone. The echo of the Canticle's bridegroom drawing his flock behind him, to Galilee, still reverberates. Ever the professional messenger, the angel, in a final *verbum abbreviatum*, once more summarizes his message, drives his point home and concludes his story: 'Come and see the place where the Lord was laid to rest.'¹⁶

¹⁶ The 'pathos' implied in this *verbum abbreviatum* is somehow reminiscent of the asides Homer intersperses his epic with. In *The Iliad*, when minor heroes

die, the story of their brief lives is often told within the brief space of one or two lines (Cf. Bernard's announcement in his first Sermon on the Nativity to honour the brevity of the incarnation with a brief sermon). Compressed within such narrow rhetorical confines—as another *verbum abbreviatum*—, special dimensions of space and time are brought out. At the end of book XV of *The Iliad*, for instance, when Hector is about to set fire to the ship of Protesilaus, a hopeful future is suggested by the spatial dimensions of the ship's journey, just to be scattered in the next half of the verse:

It was the fast salt-water craft that had brought Protesilaus to Troy, though it never carried him home again to his own country. (XV, 705; trans. Rieu 1973: 290)

Another fine example of a 'broken dream' can be found in book V, 149:

He [Diomedes] left them lying there, and went in chase of Abas and Poleidus, the sons of Eurydamas, an old man who believed in dreams. But he had had no dreams to expound to these two when they set out for the front, and the mighty Diomedes killed them both. (transl. Rieu 1973: 96)

Here too the elements of space and time are subtly interwoven: the 'lying there' (cf. the *ubi positus erat Dominus*) and the journey to the front converge in the dream which failed to be dreamt.

Cf. Jasper Griffin's chapter on 'Death, pathos and objectivity' in Griffin 1980: 101–43.

CHAPTER NINE

FROM RESURRECTION TO PENTECOST

1. 'Return' she says: the mystery of change

'Come and see the place where the Lord was laid to rest.' What more is there to be said after Christ's resurrection from the grave and his subsequent disappearance to Galilee? In the act of resurrection the slowly unwinding stream of Bernard's reflections had been interrupted and reduced to a state of final coherence in the shape of the empty tomb. All would have been peaceful and at rest if that tomb, however empty, were to have been the ultimate representation of Christian faith. And indeed, basically that is what it is supposed to be. Yet that very same tomb as the tiniest location on earth from which the universe is ruled, seems abandoned by Christ's departure from it to Galilee, and thence on to heaven. In that process he does not cease to be the *verbum abbreviatum* he is. But how can one correctly express a situation in which the word/*verbum* becomes even more alive/*vivax* and efficient/*efficax* than it was, without recurring to a kind of spatial extension? In the Bernardine context there is but one answer to that question. The poetry of the Cantic presents us with an image matching this state of affairs. That image is basic. Underlying it is nothing, no structure, no extra-linguistic or doctrinal framework. It is the bridegroom drawing his flock behind him to Galilee, or, as Bernard had put it in Sermon 23 on the Song of Songs, it is the shepherd, having left his bride in the bedchamber of the king, resting in the fields at midday, it is Christ *petens coelos*/on his way to heaven.

But how does Bernard extend this poetic moment into an orderly narrative? To get a better grip on his literary strategy, let us first further analyze and rephrase the question. If we look back on the road we have travelled during the construction process of 'the way of celebrating', some conclusions may be drawn. Abstract art has been in the making. The geometry of Christmas resulted in lines and

circles marking dimensions of breadth and depth without extension in existing images of faith. The mathematical structure of the Nativity, for instance, also bore the nucleus of the Passion and the Resurrection only to develop into an increasing degree of thinness and fluidity. Now in the 'apodeictic' moment of the empty tomb Bernard can be said to have found what he wanted all along. 'I do not want any more symbols and riddles (*figuras et enigmata*). I even get tired of the pretty shapes of the angels.' And, indeed, symbols and riddles have gone, although the narration of the story still seems to be firmly in the hands of an angel. Consequently, phrasing Christ's disappearance from the tomb in terms derived from the Canticle—I borrow that procedure from the end of Sermon 1 on the Resurrection—,¹ has to account for its symbol-less nature as well as for its gesture-like rather than narrative form. There is no way back to the old days of stuttering prophetic speech now that the word has once and for all made a decisive incision in history. Yet we have seen that Bernard's own 'angelic' grammar is far from flawless (*hilaritas quaedam in vultu illius*), a fact which might be taken to symbolize the problems one faces when trying adequately to express what is going on in and around the *monumentum claustrum*. How then do we speak after the angel's gesture? Do we have to resort to apophatic language, to negative theology? Linguistically speaking, is there life after the Resurrection?

Let us go back for a moment to the Elisha-story. Bernard's application of the Canticle-text to it resulted in the absorbing power of the *osculum oris* drawing the antagonists, the prophet and the dead boy, into the 'empty' moment of resurrection in which death could no longer be distinguished from life and vice versa. In retrospect—or rather, seen from the perspective of the Old Testament story, in anticipation—a very good reason could be given for the merging of the prophet and the boy into one figure: auto-resurrection. Yet, just as the supreme kiss of life only made sense after the heightening of unfulfilled desire on the part of the fathers,

¹ '...ipso praestante qui transivit ex hoc mundo ad Patrem, et nos quoque trahere post se [Cant 1, 3] et in Galileam vocare dignatur, ut semetipsum nobis ostendat, qui est super omnia Deus in saecula benedictus.' (Res 1 18; SBOP V: 94)

so the prophet, in order to be able to come down from mount Carmel, had to be a different person from the dead boy.

Now, in the narrative told by the only perfect speaker (*perfectus*) ever, the angel, the same old story, instead of being done away with, is repeated once more, albeit upside down. Pointing to the place 'where the Lord was laid to rest', the angel subtly re-tells the story about the prophet coming down from the mountain, albeit in the reverse order. Here the very same prophetic *figura* manifests itself in the guise of the Lord leaving the tomb for Galilee. Thus the *locus* of the abbreviated word turns out to consist of two focal points rather than one, the second (Christ leaving for Galilee) being a mirror-image of the first (Elisha coming down from Mount Carmel).² Both coming and going converge in the *monumentum claustrum*—symbolised by the indivisible moment of the kiss—through the opening of which its inhabitant has been launched into as yet undiscovered space.

But how can one entrust the faculty of memory to so bi-focal an event, and resurrect it from there, all the while doing justice to its simple nature?

To answer this question, I now propose to turn to Sermon 74 on the Song of Songs and, speculatively, to read it as an 'angelic' narrative. There is a sense in which that sermon dealing with the coming and going of the bridegroom in the soul of the preacher, can indeed be seen as a *figura* of the gesture by which the angel indicates the dynamics of the Resurrection. It goes without saying that this *figura* is as much *sine figura*, as much symbol-less, as Bernard's measure of love is without measure, and the length and breadth of his *verbum abbreviatum* are without extension. In fact, it is love personified as well as the briefest manifestation of the living and effective word.

The Canticle-text under consideration is: *REVERTERE, SIMILIS ESTO, DILECTE MI, CAPRAE HINNULOQUE CERVORUM*. At the beginning of Sermon 73 Bernard had succinctly sketched the literal meaning of this text:

² In a sense the bi-focal nature of the Resurrection-image is reminiscent of *De gradibus humilitatis et superbiae*: the descent and the ascent of the travelling monk converge into one and the same *scala*. See Chapter Three.

What? Hardly has he gone than she calls him back. Can anything new have turned up in so brief a moment of time? Is there something she has forgotten? Indeed, she has forgotten all that is not him, that is, herself. (SC 73 I 1)

This literal meaning being grossly insufficient, Bernard turns to the spiritual level. There we see the bridegroom Jesus—*is enim Sponsus est*—who, upon leaving this world for heaven, promises his desolate Apostles to come back. Of course, this does not mean that we should forget the literal meaning, for once again we find Bernard's dramatization of the Canticle-text coincide with the subject matter, his rhetorical technique with the expression of affection. The very element of forgetting, moreover, will play a major part in the calling back of the bridegroom. For memory, and the loss of it, are at stake when we try to express the visibility of an event which threatens to move out of its own image.

As an incentive to the reader's memory the opening words of Sermon 74 reduce the same Canticle-text to its bare essentials: "Return," she says.' Clearly, this abbreviation is intended to heighten the intensity of the call for return. I hope to demonstrate that, in Bernard's perception, it also governs the ever expanding and ever contracting cycle of the monastic imagery.

Before tracing the course of one single word (the *vox*): return/*revertere* in Sermon 74, let us at once enter the inner sanctum of the sermon: Bernard's account of the coming and going of the Word in his soul.

You must now bear a little with my foolishness. I want to tell—for that I have committed myself to—how I have fared in this matter. Of course, it is of no use. But I will proceed in the hope to offer some profit and if you will make some progress, I will be reconciled with my foolishness; if you do not, I will admit being the fool I am. I tell you that the Word has come even to me—I speak in my foolishness—and that it has come more than once (*pluries!*). Yet however often he has come, I have never been aware of the moment of his coming. I have known he was there; I remembered his presence afterward; sometimes I had an inkling that he was coming. But I never felt it, nor did I feel his leaving me. And whence he

comes when he enters my soul, or where he goes when he leaves it, and how he enters and leaves, I frankly do not know. As it is written, 'You do not know whence he comes nor where he goes' (Jn 3,8)...He did not enter by the eyes, for he has no colour; nor by the ears, for he made no sound; nor by the nostrils, for he is not mingled with air, but with mind. He did not blend into the air; he created it. His coming was not tasted by the mouth, for he was not eaten or drunk; nor could he be touched, for he is unpalpable. So by what route did he enter? Or perhaps he did not enter at all, because he did not come from outside...If I looked outward, I saw him far beyond. If I looked inward, he was still deeper inside. And I knew that what I had read was true, that 'in him we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17,28). But blessed is he in whom he has his being, who lives for him and is moved by him'.³ (SC 74 II 5; Evans 1987: 254-5)

There is no way of denying the mystical setting and tone of this passage, and for good reason it has traditionally been considered one of the highlights of Medieval mystical experience. However, in accordance with my analyses of Bernard's texts, I prefer to call it a form of 'angelic' speech. This does not preclude the use of 'mysticism'. But it forces the reader to measure such an experience leaving little or no room for manoeuvring outside the coming and going of the Word as described in this passage. In other words, there is no clear build-up in language or experience preparing for the exclusive moment of mystical rapture. By 'angelic speech' I mean more specifically that a *verbum abbreviatum* is being spoken

³ The setting of the entire sermon, and this passage in particular, is reminiscent of Origen's Homilies on the Song of Songs: 'Deinde conspicit sponsum, qui conspectus abscedit. Et frequenter hoc in toto carmine facit, quod, nisi quis ipse patiat, non potest intelligere. Saepe, Deus testis est, sponsus mihi adventare conspexi et mecum esse quam plurimum, quo subito recedente, invenire non poteri quod quaerebam. Rursum igitur desidero eius adventum et nonnumquam iterum venit, et cum apparuerit meisque fuerit manibus comprehensus, rursus elabatur et, cum fuerit elapsus, a me rursus inquiritur et hoc crebre facit, donec illum vere teneam et adscendam "innixa super fratrelem meum."' (Hom. in Cant. Canticorum, I 7, Sources chrétiennes 37: 75). Cf. Deroy 1963: 149, Brésard 1983: 64, McGinn 1992: 124, 378, Harl 1977: 24-5. For the possibility of Ambrosian influence with regard to the pattern of presence and absence, see McGinn 1992: 211.

which underlies and shapes 'mystical' experience both in its coming about and its going away. Just as the kiss of the mouth in the Elisha-scene drew the story within its sphere of influence, so the *figura* of the abridged word represents auto-resurrection, and, accordingly, a form of auto-description. In that act both the performer and the subject performed on, both the prophet and the boy, both the bride and the bridegroom, tell one and the same story. Any commentary whatsoever on the nature of such an experience has to adhere to, and become part of, the narrative economy of that word which is 'life-bringing and efficient'. Beyond its *vox* there is nothing to be heard or said.

What then is there to be heard and said? If Bernard's 'mystical experience' is embedded in the *figura* of a *verbum abbreviatum*, what does that *figura* look like, what shape does it assume? If we do not know whence the Word comes and where it goes, what can be said about the imitative account of its appearance on the part of the monastic author?

'And I know that what I had read was true: "in him we live, move and have our being." But blessed is he in whom he has his being, who lives for him, is moved by him.'

The *in quo ipsum est*/'in whom he has his being' reminds one of the *nisi propter ipsum qui sine ipso es nihil*/'because of him, (you) who are nothing without him' in Sermon 51. It is the same intimacy marked by the same deeply felt affective love. Now in Sermons 50–52 on the Canticum we have also seen how fragile and unprotected this *ipsum* turned out to be, living under the permanent threat of the interruptions and vicissitudes of effective love. Furthermore, rather than operating on its own authority, this threat of failure proved to be part and parcel of the coming about of contemplative rest. We are able, therefore, now to collect in one *figura* the different scenes we have been dealing with in the previous chapters. Living in the enclosed space of the monastery which is supposed to reflect the life of the angels in the presence of God—'in Him we live and move'—is but an imitation of the coming and going of the bridegroom. Consequently, the monastic way of life is marked by interruption, delay and death. That which Bernard, in the present sermon, calls the *mutabilitatis sacramentum*/'the mystery of change' tells the story of the *vicissitudines euntis et redeuntis Verbi*/the

alternations of the coming and going of the Word. That Word we have seen appearing and disappearing in many different guises and in many different identities. Yet, in the end, it is one and the same *figura* which covers all its manifestations. In Sermon 26 on the Song of Songs, for instance, Bernard himself, acting out a 'human' mystery of change, had discovered his own *ipsum* to have gone in the person of his brother. In his early work *De gradibus*, a similar experience had been expressed in more decadent terms as the death of the presumptuous monk at the bottom of the ladder of pride who had left the monastery only to return through the backdoor of Lazarus' resurrection. Change, again, appeared to be at work in the Elisha-story of the *osculum oris* and, similarly, in the figures of the women running to the grave at early dawn, and, finally, in the departure of Christ for Galilee. All those scenes, in one way or another, expressed what Bernard had been reading in the Scripture: 'In Him we live, move and have our being.'

So much then for the intimacy, 'moving' as well as 'being', between the visiting Word and the visited soul. In the following paragraph of the sermon the lightness of that visit, while being continued, more or less materialises in the spatial image of a plantation. In tropological terms there is talk of building activities on the site where the Word touched down momentarily and incomprehensibly:

Given the fact that its ways are so inscrutable, you might ask: where do I get my knowledge? That Word is living and effective. As soon as it has entered it wakes up the sleeping soul. It moves and mollifies, and wounds my heart since it is hard and stony and in bad health. It also began to root up and demolish, to build and to plant, to irrigate the arid grounds, to illuminate darkness, to re-open what was closed off, to set fire to what was cold, to change the worse for the better, to make bad roads accessible, that my soul might bless the Lord, and all that is in me his holy name. As often as the Word-bridegroom entered me, he never ever indicated his introitus, either orally, or visibly or tangibly. None of his movements ever came to my knowledge; none of my senses indicated that he had invaded my inner being. As I have said before, it was only through a movement in my heart that I realised his presence.

And through avoidance of vices and discovery and abandonment of my hidden sins I came to admire the depth of his wisdom. And from whatever progress I made I experienced the goodness of his mildness. And from the reformation and renewal of my spirit, that is, of my inner man, I appreciated his splendour. And watching all this simultaneously, I shuddered at the size of his magnitude. (SC 74 II 6)

However untouchable the Word itself may be, its tropological effects are unmistakably real. In the absence of any local and spatial extension of the Word itself, it is there, in the soil fertilised by the latter's 'non-appearance', that the contours of its workings are to be discerned. Consequently, efforts to trace back the comings and goings of the Word ought to originate in the tropological figure incorporated in this visitation.

For the time being, however, those efforts seem bound to result in failure. In a split second the very same fertile plantation turns into an arid desert. And, even though, somehow, memories of this happy visit are kept alive—for, how could one deny the visibility of such strong moral effects?—it is the mystery of change which strikes back.

Truly, since all these [fertile effects] begin to wither as soon as the Word vanishes, as if you withdraw fire from a burning pot, and, while languishing away on the spot, become lukewarm and cold—that to me is a sign of its departure—my soul inevitably becomes sad, until it *returns* and my heart becomes warm as usual as an indication of its *return*. My experience with the Word being what it is, is it surprising that I also join in with the voice of the bride *recalling* the Word when it has gone away since I burn with a desire, if not identical with, then fairly similar, to hers? As long as I live, I will be familiar with the *Word of revocation* in the service of the *revocation of the Word*, that is, *Return*. And as often as it vanishes, I will repeat it and I will not cease to cry out, my heart burning with desire, to him who is going away, that he must *return*, and *return* to me the joy of his salvation, that he must *return* to me his very own self. (SC 74 II 7)

'Where do I get my knowledge?' That knowledge is buried in the tropological *figura* of the plantation, in terms of the Resurrection-

story, in the dead person lying in the grave, symbolised in 'the heart of stone' / *cor durum et lapideum*, whose mute voice is heard by the Resurrector and, invisibly, transformed into a *praeparatio cordis* on the part of the dead body. But knowledge it is. Or, more precisely: it is 'an experiencing of the Word' / *experimentum de Verbo* which enables its addressee to speak up. Just as the dead boy in the Elisha-scene uttered the immortal words: 'I do not rise...unless the prophet himself comes down and kisses me with the kiss of his mouth,' so Bernard's account of the visit of the Word begins in his stony heart and his mute voice. The words originating in that arid-fertile location somehow correspond to the course of the Word itself. Rather than reflecting on his experience and analyzing it, Bernard proposes to join in the ongoing *vox* of the bride. Indeed, that is the only option left to him. All other extensions into thought and words would be cut off by the razor included in the *experimentum Verbi*. For, in the same way as the coming and going of the Word are invisible, intangible and inaudible and, therefore, inexpressible beyond their 'non-appearance', so a bottom line is drawn in the field of human experience by the 'verbal' shape of the tropological plantation, the dead body, the stony heart. As a result, neither divine nor human sources are available offering further information with regard to the vicissitudes of the Word apart from the words to be uttered by someone 'resurrectable', someone having sufficient *experimentum Verbi*, someone who is able to conform to the shape of the *Verbum abbreviatum*. If ever the timeless transformation of auto-resurrection into auto-description is to be caught, it is in this moment when Bernard the author jumps on the carousel which moves and keeps into being the *retour éternel* of the Word.

So in a by now familiar move Bernard has situated himself once more in the proximity of the bride. In what follows I shall try to describe the rhetoric shared by both the *Verbum* and the *verbum*, the bridegroom and the bride. To get the perspective right, a third person should be added: the angel who, like the messenger in Greek tragedy, 'obliquely' testifies—*testimomium perhibet ille qui vidit*—to what has been going on in the *monumentum claustrum*.

As for the rhetorical shape of the Word's visit, attention should be drawn to its Pauline setting. Not only the introduction to the

'mystical' experience 'Now bear a little with my foolishness' in paragraph 5, but also earlier preparatory remarks in paragraph 3 have a decidedly Pauline ring to them.

And now give me a soul which is in the habit of being visited by the Word, to which familiarity has bestowed flair, taste hunger and contempt for all other things rest, and I shall neither hesitate to give her the name of 'bride' nor deny that the present text applies to her. For someone like that is here introduced as the speaker. Him whom she calls back, his presence she proves to have deserved, though not abundantly so. Otherwise she would not have called him back, but just have called him. For *return* really is a word of *revocation*. (SC 74 I 3)

If our first impression of the Word's visit to the soul was one of integrity and completeness, or if we saw it metaphorically as a Golden Bowl, a closer look at the rhetorical embedding now reveals a serious crack. However, far from being fatal and spoiling the dream of integrity, this crack bears the *figura* of Christ having gone to Galilee, *petens coelos*. As such it contributes, bi-focally, to the dramatization of Christian life, to the 'being and moving' in the Word.

Return certainly is a word of *revocation*. And perhaps he has even withdrawn in order to be recalled the more vehemently, to be taken hold of the more forcefully. For in former times he also happened that he feigned having to go away, not because he wanted to, but because he wanted to hear: 'Stay with us, for evening will fall.' And when on another occasion he walked on the water while the Apostles were in the boat labouring to row back, he pretended to pass them by, not because he really wanted to, but rather because he wanted to test their faith and draw out their prayer. That is why, as the Evangelist says, they were upset and cried out thinking they were seeing ghosts. Therefore, such pious simulation, or, indeed, salutary planning, displayed by the Word physically when it was still in the body, does not cease to be offered by the same Word in its spiritual mode when it zealously stirs the soul devoted to it. Passing by it wants to be taken hold of, going away it wants to be recalled. For the Word is not 'irrevocable': it goes away and

returns as it pleases, as if visiting at dawn, and suddenly testing. The going away is somehow part of its planning. Return, on the other hand, is always a matter of its will. Both are full of discretion. But it alone knows the ratio of the one as well as of the other. (SC 74 I 3)

Once more it becomes clear that the visit of the Word is bent on having the dead awake from their *rigor mortis* and speak up. Whether we see the frantically rowing Apostles or hear the cry of the men of Emmaus, the mysterious 'non-appearance' of an almost phantom-like figure draws out as yet unheard of language: 'stay with us for the evening will fall.' From the tropological description of the plantation which follows later on in the sermon—and which can be seen as a continuation of the Resurrection scene—we already know that those crying out in such desperation are basically shaped according to the proportions of a dead body—or, for that matter, a stony heart—lying mutely in the grave. They are 'resurrectable', to be invited in one indivisible moment to speak up and to perform auto-resurrection on their own mute voices and dead bodies.

It is this encapsulation in the Word which enables Bernard to act the Pauline fool. Thus the rhetorical-Pauline move by which one distances oneself from the intensity and (literary) integrity of the 'mystical experience' about to be described ('bear a little with my foolishness') is in a sense foreshadowed and mirrored in the 'act' of the *pia simulatio*. Consequently, rather than with an indescribable wholeness of a mystical experience the reader is presented with light drama. He himself by implication being the body visited by the Word witnesses the manifestation of the crack in the Golden Bowl, the coming about of the bi-focal (dis-)appearance of the bridegroom on his way to the fields of Galilee. The latter is not really going to stay just as he is not really going to leave. In the absence of any rational account of this event outside the Word itself—cf. *at penes ipsum horum ratio*—the *ratio* of his presence is best described in terms of poetry. Somehow Christ's wandering on the sea and his evening walk with the ignorant men of Emmaus reminds one of that other ghost-like image we have come across, the *Foebus abierat*, the broken dream of the beloved at the window, encompassed by Bernard's rendering of the nocturnal fight with the Angel: *Dilectus meus mihi, dilectus meus mihi*/my beloved is mine, my beloved is mine.

One would expect a Pauline-Bernardine experience of the Word's visit to stand out by its sheer singularity and uniqueness. To be rapt into the third heaven does not seem to be an every-day event, nor does the coming down of the Word. However, quite the opposite holds true. The *figura* of the coming and going of the Word imposes a slightly oblique form on the Pauline text, contracting and expanding it to the size of its own bi-focal proportions. Thus a sense of movement is introduced in the text which, almost unnoticed, develops into a continuous to and fro. Watching this process of the comings and goings of the bridegroom inevitably takes on the shape of repetition. In that context the question arises what we ought to make of Bernard's claim as to the frequent nature of the Word's visit. Contrary to the original Pauline *raptus* into the third heaven (1 Corinth. 11), Bernard's version includes frequency (*frequenter visere*) as well. Similarly, the account of his own 'private' experience suggests that the Word's visits take place on a fairly regular basis.

I admit that the Word has also come to me, indeed, more than once (*pluries*). Though it entered me rather often (*saepius*), yet I did not feel it each time (*aliquoties*) it did so. (SC 74 II 5)

Of course, in one way or another, this regularity must be rooted in the tropological process described as the cultivation of the plantation. Such a process takes time to develop and mature according to the cyclical course of nature. It is there that the addressee of the Word is born and reborn, over and over again, and it is there that the latter's own imitative and repetitive speech originates. However, within the interior drama of the *verbum abbreviatum*, regularity is as regular as it is brief. At this point we face once more the demands of geometrical precision. Eventually, that demand for precision comes down to the following question. What is the shape of the *verbum abbreviatum*, what language does it speak, what creative, linguistic effects does it leave behind in the soul which it visits and resurrects? What is the status of the speech addressed to, and spoken by, the resurrected self?

There is no denying that the soul touched by the Word suffers under the brevity of its visits.

It is a fact that the alternations of the Word's coming and going materialise in the soul in this manner, as it is written: 'I go and come to you,' and elsewhere: 'A little while and you will no longer see me, and a little while and you will see me' *MODICUM, ET NON VIDEBITIS ME; ET ITERUM MODICUM, ET VIDEBITIS ME*. O little while and little while! O lengthy little while! *O modicum et modicum! O modicum longum!* Dear Lord, do you call that a little while that we do not see you? May the word of my Lord be salutary; it is long, and much too much so. Yet perhaps the truth lies in its being two faced: brief as far as merits, and long as far as desire is concerned. You can find the two meanings in the Prophet: 'If he lingers (*SI MORAM FECERIT*), do expect him because he will not delay his arrival.' (SC 74 I 4)

In the *modicum* and *modicum* the geometrical lines without extension converge into the pointillistic action of the *verbum abbreviatum*. If we look back at sacred history as a mathematical process, we can distinguish lines, tentatively marked by the prophets and finally curved into the enclosed space of the *monumentum claustrum*. Thence history moves on dominated as much by that circular monument in retrospect as it had been anticipated by it in ancient times. Yet the circle is as little a circle as the line is a line. Rather one should assess this process in Joycean terms as 'curvilinear'.⁴ In the *figura* of the ascension, foreshadowed by the scene of Christ leaving for Galilee, the *claustrum* of the tomb has become bi-focal, though only as a *trompe l'oeil*. From that point of view Christ's going away is not to be seen in terms of linear time as a result of his coming. Both the postponement of his arrival in ancient times and the delay of his return are preceded by earlier arrivals which, in turn, are preceded by earlier returns. But return is where it all begins:

'Return' she says. Clearly, he whom she is *calling back*, is not present. Yet he was there a moment ago. For when he was still in the process of leaving, she seemed to *call him back*. (SC 74 I 1)

⁴ See the Introduction to Part III.

Here the opening words of Sermon 74, “‘Return’, she says’, do indeed coincide with the actual state of affairs. Cutting short all previous comings and goings and all explanatory circumventions by the preacher, it matches rhetorically the proportions of a *verbum abbreviatum*. Now, of course, in human language that word can be said to have a beginning, somehow and somewhere. However, being so defined, it would fail to live up to its brevity. A shorter version of the same word is presented by its being and meaning ‘return’, or, more precisely, by its being a call for return.

The results of this rhetorical move on Bernard’s part are spectacular. Retrospectively, the gigantic dynamics of the comings and goings of the Word set into motion by Bernard in Sermon 74 are governed by the atomic power of one single word ‘return’. Taking return as a point of departure Bernard sets himself an enormous task and we are almost inclined to believe him if he tells us that he is not up to it and that the matter should rather be handled by someone more expert in the field and more familiar with the secrets of holy love. For since there is no possibility of going back behind this beginning of ‘return’, no return behind ‘return’, Bernard drives himself rhetorically forward into the litany of crying out for him who has *really* gone, who is *really* absent.

REVERTERE, ait.

Bene.

Abibat, revocatur.

‘Return’, she says. Very well. He went away, he is called back. Who will explain to me adequately the going away and coming back of the Word? Is it not true that the Bridegroom uses change? But whence does he come or where does he go since he fills the universe? What spatial movement can he make who is spirit? Or, what movement, of whatever sort, do you attribute to him who is God? For he is immutable. (SC 74 I 1)

It now becomes evident that the all-embracing presence of the Word achieves greater unity in a bi-focal *claustrum* than in a one-dimensional mystical *raptus*. If there is any rapture at all, it is Christ’s unwitnessed movement out of the tomb to Galilee, as the shepherd who goes out of the bedroom to rest in the fields at midday. The *trompe l’oeil* which is needed optically to grasp such scenes as ultimate expressions of an enclosed intimacy is implied in

the beginnings of return as inscribed in the walls of the monastery. From that atomic point of perspective the rest follows. The bride has indeed forgotten something, that is, *totum quod non est ille* 'all that is not him', the bridegroom. In a bitter-sweet process of remembering she sets out to reshape the *temps perdu* by recalling the *figura* of the vanishing Word. In terms of the Canticle this *figura* is realised by the bridegroom 'drawing his flock behind him'. This, indeed, is to be called light drama. The crack in the Golden Bowl, or, for that matter, in the *monumentum claustrum*, activates memory and creates theatre. The modesty and excuses of the author, the *pia simulatio* of Christ himself, the author pretending to be the Pauline fool, all those diversions spring from the word 'return' and are to be considered imitations of Christ's departure from the empty tomb. It is there, ultimately, that the little while/*modicum* and frequency/*frequenter* meet. In one lengthy, incantational cry the *modicum* is repeated so as to cause an effect of uninterrupted permanence.

Therefore all that she can do is dedicatedly seek the presence of him who is absent, *call back* him who has gone. Thus the Word is *called back*, it is *called back* by the desire of the soul, that is, of that soul which had once indulged in his sweetness. For is desire not a sound (*vox*)? It is so for good reason. As Scripture says: 'The desire of the poor has been heard by the Lord'. That is why, when the Word goes away, the interval consists of one protracted sound, one protracted desire for him, as one protracted 'Return' until he comes. *Restat igitur ut absentem studiose requirat, revocet abeuntem. Ita ergo revocatur Verbum, et revocatur desiderio animae, sed eius animae, cui semel indulserit suavitatem sui. Numquid non desiderium vox? Et valida. Denique DESIDERIUM PAUPERUM, inquit, EXAUDIVIT DOMINUS. Verbo igitur abeunte, una interim et continua animae vox, continuum desiderium eius, tamquam unum continuumque REVERTERE, donec veniat.* (SC 74 II 7)

One last glance at the *verbum abbreviatum* 'return' brings back to the reader's memory the *figura* of the prophet Elisha. Just as his

osculum oris had absorbed the story of coming and delay, so the sound of *revertere*/return as the protracted cry of the resurrected self here catches Christ's going away forever to be remembered again.

2. Tristes tropiques: *Sermon 4 on the Resurrection*

By way of conclusion I would like to recall the different aspects which went into the making of the monastic *figura*. First Bernard's extra-mural world of time and history was passed by as well as contracted into the monastery. Once inside, however, we saw him continue his 'miserable' life in the monastic rite. Out of the contours of this penitential ritual emerged the *figura* of the bride and bridegroom converging, as it were, in the person of the monastic author. The bridegroom being on his way out more than countered the bride's joy about her own arrival. Thus the pattern was set for the monastic reenactment of the Cantic: the litany of the *perdite vixi* resulting from the bridegroom's failure to stay and the bride's failure to enter his dwellings was to be continued as a means to activate the memory to recover the elusive moment of arrival and fulfilment. This basic image of the Cantic-way of life in the monastery materialised in the picture of the monk on the ladder of ascent and descent. In a miraculous way his miserable fall into the depth of sin resulted in a more intense evocation of the bride entering the king's bedroom. The sinful monk being none else than the monastic author it was the self-same person who in the end re-entered the monastery in the guise of a resurrected Lazarus.

Next, love and death contributed to the dynamic nature of the monastic *figura*. The basic features of this *figura*, the arriving and departing bridegroom and the broken dreams of the bride, staying in place, the attention increasingly focused on the narrow spot of the monastic *terra* which was supposed to contain both the endless repetitions of the monastic rite and the uncertainties of the epic and lyricism of love and death, both the reassuring continuity of the *laus perennis* and the threatening disruptions of the non-ritualised notions of life and death.

Finally Bernard was seen accomplishing the astonishing task of contracting all those elements into the *figura* of the celebrating monk. All different *loci* were reduced to the one and only image of

the *monumentum claustrum* which, empty though it was, presented us with the ultimate version of the bridegroom's arrival and departure.

Bringing back to mind Bernard's use of gold and glitter as an indication of the workings of the *verbum abbreviatum*, I once more want to draw attention to the sombre spell hanging over the monk's habitat. It is no mean task to be called upon to live the life of uninterrupted plainchant and prayer while knowing that its final realisation consists of brief and evanescent moments of glitter. This, then, is what Bernard's *terra* is supposed to bring out. Being one, single *figura* it comprises both endless repetition and the brevity of the unique, both the routine of penitence and liturgy reflecting eternal rest and the broken dream reflecting failure. Yet, belonging to one and the same *figura* the two are indistinguishably reciprocal: the broken dream—told in the incantational cry for return—cuts short and absorbs the *longue durée* of eternity reigning in the Jerusalem of Clairvaux.

All that awaits description now is the *figura* of the monk who is supposed to embody and perform this ritual of success and failure. What does he himself think of this place, this *terra*, where he has laid his soul to rest for evermore? Do the elusive manifestations of the divine lover as described above match his expectations upon entering the monastery? Or does he have to admit that his dreams have failed to come true now that the routine of the monastic life seems to have turned into an almost frozen form of crisis-management?

In the fourth Sermon on the Resurrection Bernard cannot refrain from balancing with a touch of sadness the triumphant mood of the monastic life lived and celebrated to the full. The sermon runs as follows:

Everything we read about the Saviour is to be considered medication for our souls. Let us therefore be careful that it cannot be said about us: 'We have taken care to cure Babylon and it has not recovered.' Let each of you consider the effect of such salubrious medication. There are monks to whom Christ has not yet been born, there are others to whom he has

not yet suffered and yet others to whom he has not yet risen. Some to whom he has not yet ascended and others to whom he has not yet sent the Spirit. There are those to whom he has not yet risen. They are under the spell of anxiety caused by labour and affliction caused by penitence: that is, they are affected by death all day long, having not yet received spiritual consolation. But, unless these days were shortened, who could sustain it all? To others Christ has risen, but not yet ascended. Indeed, he still abides with them on earth in pious sweetness, that is with those who practise devotion all day long, weeping in their prayers, sighing in their meditations. Theirs is a festive and fruitful life and they keep singing the Alleluia daily, uninterruptedly. However, it is right that milk should be taken away from them that they might learn to eat solid food, and it is fitting to them that Christ should go away and this temporal devotion be brought to a close. But when will they be able to grasp such a move? Instead, they complain that they are deserted by the Lord, deprived of grace. However, they should wait a while and settle down in the city until heaven awards them greater strength which enables them to perceive the charismata of the Holy Spirit, just as the Apostles were invited to move on to higher things and to set out on the more eminent path of love, not worried any longer about how to weep a little, but rather about how they would triumph over the common enemy in an enormous victory, treading Satan under their feet. (Res 4 1-2)

Basically, Bernard presents here, at least at first sight, a rather simple and clear picture of the mystical tropology. *Omnia quae de salvatore legimus*/'everything we read (in the Scripture) about the Saviour' is to be considered medication for our souls. There follows a list of Christ's main activities on earth: his birth, his passion, his resurrection and his ascension, all of which offer the soul the opportunity for transplantation into its own existence.

However, this process of tropological identification and application does not apply to just a single level of existence and devotion. In other words, the different stages of Christ's presence do not correspond with—or are not hypostatized into—a permanent state of the soul. On the contrary. The (rhetorical) point Bernard makes is that, if the monks and his audience have reached conform-

ity with Christ at all, they still differ as to the particular stage they find themselves in.

How then are those private, devotional 'cells' interrelated? What, if anything, do they have in common and who surveys the traffic between the different locations? It is here that the mastery of the monastic author is at stake, both in a doctrinal and a literary sense. Are we faced with order or with disorder? And is the order of the mystical tropology compatible with other orders of discourse and doctrine?

From a doctrinal point of view, this scene of different applications to the life of Christ is not in itself a cause for much worry. Just as in the liturgy, it is possible for the practising monk to proceed from one holy event to another without losing sight of the underlying, structural unity. And even if one realises that the *nondum*/'not yet' suggests a succession of different moments from a lower to a higher quality, from the beginning of faith to fulfilment, the culmination of this process in the charismata of the Spirit does not necessarily create an ethereal atmosphere as in the prophecies of a Joachim of Fiore.

If we take a further look at this passage, we are confronted with several complicating elements. In order to get a better grasp of those complexities, let us try to analyze the text by reading backwards. First there is, indeed, a razor element in this Bernardine construction of mystical tropology. The last scene is rather telling in this respect. The gift of the Holy Spirit the apostles are waiting for is not primarily to be found in a universal presence of a church or doctrine which could offer a badly needed underlying structure. The final result of the tropological identification-process is far more disturbing than that. The monk who has passed through the successive moments of identification with Christ—birth, passion, resurrection and ascension—finds himself all of a sudden empty handed and deserted. The Christ who was so close to him in that beautiful *corpus mysticum* of tropology has now left the scene. As a consequence they complain that they are deserted by God and deprived of grace/*desertos sese a Domino, privatos gratia conqueruntur*. And even the optimistic note struck in the following *expectent paululum*: the exhortation to wait a little and be confident, rests on little more than the suspended arrival of future means of superior love (*supereminetior via caritatis*).

Second, the almost eschatological tone of this passage—and of the apostle-scene in particular—should be noted. Again, this need not pose a problem at all in an apocalyptic context. Here, however, it raises specific questions with regard to the status of the different scenes from the life of Christ and to their interrelatedness. As a result, the usefulness of an order of events which is governed by 'historical' succession is put into serious doubt. For what in a historical sequence is regarded as the last and final event of God's manifestation on earth: the coming of the Spirit, reveals an altogether different meaning within the context of a mystical topology which is ultimately rooted in the non-progressive presence of a fixed place. In fact, when Bernard's reader/monk identifies his own situation with the coming of the Spirit, he does nothing but remind himself of his present situation, which by nature of its location prevents him from escaping his status as a professional weeper. Consequently, when Bernard, at the end of the passage, contrasts the *paululum flere* of his audience with the triumphant military action of the apostles—a result of superior love—he sets himself the task of (re-)discovering those charismatic and victorious gifts of the Spirit in the every-day life of his fellow-monks.

Let us continue our close reading. The remark concerning the monks who complain that they are deserted by the Lord (in his ascension) is preceded by even tougher information. Those to whom the Lord has not yet ascended—being part of the catalogue of people in whose existence the Lord has not yet fully materialized—have failed to realise the temporal nature of their present situation: the *temporalis devotio*. For their sake it is quite fitting that Christ should have left. Now a clash appears inevitable between the fixed nature of the monastic way of life on the one hand and its temporariness on the other. Of all places, one would not expect the paradise of the Cistercian monastery to be undermined in its secure existence, not even by the superior future of grace and love. Yet the tropological moment between Christ's resurrection and ascension—so movingly described by Bernard as Christ's sweet *conversatio* in the monastic world—is undercut. By whom? That is the problem. The monk himself living his monastic life by being incorporated into the uninterrupted mechanics of liturgy, produces the sweet presence of Christ. He is involved in devotional acts all day long, weeping in his prayers, sighing in his meditations and

festively singing the Alleluia. World without end. As such the course of those sacred mechanics cannot be broken into from the outside without causing their immediate destruction. If Bernard, as author and preacher, is prepared to blow it all up by having Christ move out of the fixed frame of the liturgical-monastic existence, he seems to turn the monastic world upside down.⁵ It is clear, however, that this literary move would make no sense if it was used with an intent other than to strengthen the very nature of monastic life. Any other interpretation of this passage would make Bernard an exile of his own mystical tropology both as monk and as author.

In line with the pattern of evasion and withdrawal noted in the last two tropological units: the waiting for the Spirit and Christ's ascension, the next step backwards shows the same picture. The monks who are still labouring in anxiety and the affliction of penitence—again nothing more or less than the daily routine of monastic life—are affected by death all day long. But, unless those days were shortened, who could survive? Here death is confronted with death and uninterrupted time with uninterrupted time: the daily routine of penitence with the presence of 'spiritual consolation' which it is supposed to evoke. Ultimately, the spiritual consolation is caused by the victory of Christ over death—as we have seen, the initial theme of this series of Sermons on the Resurrection. Death, however qualified, being at the same time the *modus vivendi* of the monastery, seems to be in urgent need of having terms set to its condition, in other words, of being brought to life. It is this effect which Bernard tries to achieve by the litany of the *sunt enim quibus nondum Christus...* The monastic site, the monastic liturgy and penitence, all of them are fixed spots, inaccessible for the ups and downs and the uncertainties of linear time. However, in order to be really operational, they have—however paradoxical it may seem—to be reduced once more to a final *verbum abbreviatum*. *Sed nisi*

⁵ When Bernard here recommends that milk be taken away and replaced by solid food, we are reminded of the opening line of the Sermons on the Songs of Songs: 'Vobis, fratres, alia quam aliis de saeculo, aut certe aliter dicenda sunt. Illis siquidem lac potum dat, et non escam, qui Apostoli formam tenet in docendo.' In Sermon 4 on the Resurrection even the professional liturgical-monastic context appears to be no guarantee for the substantial nature of spiritual life. Cf. Brésard 1983: 31 about the origin of the milk-metaphor in Origen.

breviati fuissent dies illi 'but unless these days were shortened...' All these different 'pointillistic' spots on the circumference of the monastic circle are to be contracted in a simultaneous act of death and resurrection. Translated into literary terms this means the following. As far as the linear narrative is concerned, Bernard stretches his line of argument between the poles of the *sunt quibus nondum natus est Christus*, on the one hand, and the apostles waiting for the coming of the Spirit, on the other. The last mystical tropology (the apostles) is at the same time the most ambiguous. The monk, even in the disguise of the apostle waiting for the Holy Ghost and ready to conquer the world, is stuck to his place and cannot be uprooted. Spiritual consolation has to be found in one and the same *terra*. It is here that the *quibus nondum* strikes, death is dissolved and the days are shortened. The picture of the expectant apostles—*sedeant in civitate*—is fitting indeed. Totally dispossessed, Bernard's monk is not less desirous for spiritual food than were the apostles he represents. The fact, however, that the Spirit he is waiting for reveals itself in no other *figura* than in the monastic Christ, born, risen and ascended, whom he carries body and soul—and who has gone—intensifies his sadness. His is an inverted desire, a broken dream. Rather than stretching out to a future of fulfilment—both in place and in time—he focuses his longings once more on one and the same spot of death and penance. The glorious realisation of monastic Pentecost is neither more nor less than a repetition of the liturgical feast which was already going on. In this process Bernard's monk faces the fathomless depth of death. Setting on the more eminent path of love, he turns to the sweet memories of a past which does not cease to be on its way out.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Apo	<i>Apologia</i>
Csi	<i>De consideratione</i>
Dil	<i>De diligendo deo</i>
Ep	<i>Epistolae</i>
Hum	<i>De gradibus superbiae et humilitatis</i>
Miss	<i>In laudibus Virginis Matris</i>
Nat	<i>Sermones in Nativitate Domini</i>
Nat B.V.M.	<i>Sermo in Nativitate Beatae Virginis Mariae</i>
Res	<i>Sermones in Resurrectione</i>
SC	<i>Sermones super Cantica Canticorum</i>
PL	J.P. Migne, <i>Patrologiae cursus completus</i>
SBOP	<i>Sancti Bernardi opera omnia</i>

LATIN APPENDIX

Chapter One

[p.22]

Tempus est ut non obliviscar mei. Clamat ad vos mea monstruosa vita, mea aerumnosa conscientia. Ego enim Chimaera mei saeculi, nec clericum gero nec laicum. Nam monachi iamdudum exui conversationem, non habitum. (Ep 250 4; SBOP VIII: 147)

[p.24]

Atqui de ea misera vita suscipe, obsecro, residuum annorum meorum; pro his vero quos vivendo perdi, quia perdit vixi, cor contritum et humiliatum, Deus, non despicias. (SC 20 I 1; SBOP I: 114; transl. Rudolph 1990a: 267)

[p.27]

Quis enim dicere sufficit, quot modis, ut cetera taceam, sola ova versantur et vexantur, quanto studio evertuntur, subvertuntur, liquantur, durantur, diminuuntur, et nunc quidem frixa, nunc assa, nunc farsa, nunc mixtim, nunc singillatim apponuntur? Ut quid autem haec omnia, nisi ut soli fastidio consulatur? (Apo IX 20; SBOP III: 98; transl. Rudolph 1990a: 267)

[p.27–8]

Ceterum in claustris, coram legentibus fratribus, quid facit illa ridicula monstruositas, mira quaedam deformis formositas ac formosa deformitas? Quid ibi immundae simiae? Quid feri leones? Quid monstruosi centauri? Quid semihomines? Quid maculosae tigrides? Quid milites pugnantes? Quid venatores tubicinantes? Videas sub uno capite multa corpora, et rursus in uno corpore capita multa. Cernitur hinc in quadrupede cauda serpentis, illinc in pisce caput quadrupedis. Ibi bestia praefert equum, capram trahens retro dimidiam; hic cornutum animal equum gestat posterius. Tam multa denique, tamque mira diversarum formarum apparet ubique varietas, ut magis legere libeat in marmoribus, quam in codicibus, totumque diem occupare singula ista mirando, quam in lege Dei meditando. Proh Deo! si non pudet ineptiarum, cur vel non piget expensarum? (Apo XII 29; SBOP III: 106; transl. Rudolph 1990a: 283)

[p.28]

Nos vero qui iam de populo exivimus, qui mundi quaeque pretiosa ac speciosa pro Christo reliquimus, qui omnia pulchre lucentia, canore mulcentia, suave olentia, dulce sapientia, tactu placentia, cuncta denique oblectamenta corporea arbitrati sumus ut stercore, ut Christum lucrifaciamus, quorum, quaeso, in his devotionem excitare intendimus? Quem, inquam, ex his fructum requirimus: stultorum admirationem, an simplicium oblationem? (Apo XII 28; SBOP III 104–5; transl. Conrad 1990: 104–5)

[p.29–30]

Habemus in Francia novum de veteri magistro theologum, qui ab ineunte aetate sua in arte dialectica ludit, et nunc in Scripturis sanctis insanit. Olim danmata et sopita dogmata, tam sua videlicet quam aliena, suscitare conatur, insuper et nova addit. Qui dum omnium quae sunt IN CAELO ET, quae IN TERRA DEORSUM, nihil, praeter solum 'Nescio', nescire dignatur, ponit in caelum os suum et scrutatur alta Dei, rediensque ad nos refert ineffabilia, quae non licet homini loqui; et dum paratus est de omnibus reddere rationem, etiam quae sunt supra rationem, et contra rationem praesumit, et contra fidem. (Ep 190 I 1; SBOP VIII: 17–8)

[p.32–3]

Philippus vester, volens proficisci Ierosolymam, compendium viae invenit, et cito pervenit quo volebat. Transfretavit in brevi hoc mare magnum et spatiosum, et, prospere navigans, attingit iam litus optatum atque ad portum tandem salutis applicuit. Stantes sunt iam pedes eius in atriis Ierusalem, et quem audierat in Ephrata, invento in campis silvae libenter adorat in loco ubi steterunt pedes eius. Ingressus est sanctam civitatem, sortitus est cum illis hereditatem, quibus merito dicitur: IAM NON ESTIS HOSPITES ET ADVENAE, SED ESTIS CIVES SANCTORUM ET DOMESTICI DEI. Cum quibus intrans et exiens, tamquam unus e sanctis, gloriatur et ipse cum ceteris dicens: CONVERSATIO NOSTRA IN CAELIS EST. Factus est ergo non curiosus tantum spectator, sed devotus habitator et civis conscriptus Ierusalem, non autem terrenae huius, cui Arabiae mons Sina coniunctus est, quae servit cum filiis suis, sed liberae illius, quae est sursum mater nostra.

Et si vultis scire, Claravallis est. Ipsa est Ierusalem, ei quae in caelis est, tota mentis devotione, et conversationis imitatione, et cognatione quadam spiritus sociata. Haec requies illius, sicut ipse promittit, in saeculum saeculi: elegit eam in habitationem sibi, quod apud eam sit, etsi nondum visio, certe exspectatio verae pacis, illius utique de qua dicitur: PAX DEI, QUAE EXSUPERAT OMNEM SENSUM. (Ep 64 1; SBOP VII: 157–8)

[p.36]

Non est quod ad ista ipse respondeam: parcendum verecundiae meae. Responde tu pro me et pro te ipso, secundum ea quae audisti et vidisti, aut certe secundum quod tibi inspiraverit Deus. (Csi II I 3; SBOP III: 413)

Sed forte miraris me prosequi ista, qui aliud proposueram. Facio non oblitus propositi, sed quod a propositi non iudicem aliena. (Csi II I 4; SBOP III: 413)

[p.37–40]

Nec mirum. Ecclesiae filii, et qui christiano censentur nomine, prostrati sunt in deserto, aut interfecti gladio, aut fame consumpti. Effusa est contentio super principes, et Dominus errare fecit eos in invio et non in via. Contritio et infelicitas in viis eorum; pavor et maeror, et confusio in penetralibus regum ipsorum. Quam confusi pedes annuntiantium pacem, annuntiantium bona! Diximus: 'Pax', et non est pax; promisimus bona, et ecce turbatio, quasi vero temeritate in opere isto aut levitate usi simus. Cucurrimus plane in eo, non quasi in incertum, sed te iubente, immo per te Deo. Quare ergo ieiunavimus, et non aspexit, humiliavimus animas nostras, et nescivit? Nam IN HIS OMNIBUS NON EST AVERSUS FUROR EIUS, SED ADHUC MANUS EIUS EXTENTA. Quam patienter interim adhuc audit voces sacrilegas et Aegyptios blasphemantes, quia callide eduxit eos, ut occideret in deserto? Et quidem IUDICIA DOMINI VERA, quis nesciat? At iudicium hoc abyssus

tanta, ut videar mihi non immerito pronuntiare beatum, qui non fuerit scandalizatus in eo.

Et quomodo tamen humana temeritas audet reprehendere quod minime comprehendere valet? Recordemur supernorum iudiciorum, quae a saeculo sunt, si forte sit consolatio. Nam quidam ita dixit: MEMOR FUI IUDICIORUM TUORUM A SAECULO DOMINE, ET CONSOLATUS sum. Rem dico ignotam nemini et nunc nemini notam. Nempe sic se habent mortalium corda: quod scimus cum necesse non est, in necessitate nescimus. Moyses, educturus populum de terra Aegypti, meliorem illis pollicitus est terram. Nam quando ipsum aliter sequeretur populus, solam sapiens terram? Eduxit; eductos tamen in terram, quam promiserat, non introduxit. Nec est quod ducis temeritati imputari queat tristis et inopinatus eventus. Omnia faciebat Domino imperante, Domino cooperante et opus confirmante, sequentibus signis. 'Sed populus ille', inquis, 'durae cervicis fuit, semper contentiose agens contra Dominum et Moysen servum eius.' Bene: illi increduli et rebelles; hi autem quid? Ipsos interroga. Quid me dicere opus est, quod fatentur ipsi? Dico ego unum: quid poterant proficere, qui semper revertebantur, cum ambularent? Quando et isti per totam viam non redierunt corde in Aegyptum? Quod si illi ceciderunt et perierunt propter iniquitatem suam, miramur istos eadem facientes, eadem passos? Sed numquid illorum casus adversus promissa Dei? Ergo nec istorum. Neque enim aliquando promissiones Dei iustitiae Dei praeiudicant. Et audi aliud.

Peccavit Benjamin: accinguntur reliquae tribus ad ultionem, nec sine nutu Dei. Denique ipse designavit ducem praeliaturis. Itaque praeliantur, freti et manu validiori, et causa potiori et, quod his maius est, favore divino. At quam terribilis Deus in consiliis super filios hominum! Terga dedere sceleratis ultores sceleris, et paucioribus plures. Sed recurrunt ad Dominum, et Dominus ad eos: ASCENDITE, inquit. Ascendunt denuo, denuoque fusi et confusi sunt. Ita Deo primum quidem favente, secundo et iubente, iusti iustum certamen ineunt, et succumbunt. Sed quo inferiores certamine, eo fide superiores inventi sunt. Quid putas de me facerent isti, si meo hortatu iterato ascenderent, iterato succumberent? Quando me audirent monentem tertio repetere iter, repetere opus, in quo semel iam et secundo frustrati forent? Et tamen Israelitae, unam et alteram non reputantes frustrationem, tertio parent, et superant. Sed dicunt forsitan isti: 'Unde scimus quod a Domino sermo egressus sit? Quae signa tu facis, ut credamus tibi?' Non est quod ad ista ipse respondeam: parcendum verecundiae meae. Responde tu pro me et pro te ipso, secundum ea quae audisti et vidisti, aut certe secundum quod tibi inspiraverit Deus. (Csi II I 1-3; SBOP III: 411-3)

Chapter Two

[p.51]

In hoc arcanum et in hoc sanctuarium Dei, si quem vestrum aliqua hora sic rapi et sic abscondi contigerit, ut minime avocet aut perturbet vel sensus egens, vel cura pungens, vel culpa mordens, vel certe ea, quae difficilium amoveniunt, irruentia imaginum corporearum phantasmata, poterit quidem hic, cum ad nos redierit, gloriari et dicere: INTRODUXIT ME REX IN CUBICULUM SUUM. (SC 23 VI 16; SBOP I: 149-50)

[p.53]

Quod tamen an ipsum sit de quo exsultat sponsa, non temere affirmaverim. Est tamen cubiculum, et cubiculum Regis, quia nimirum de tribus, quos triplici assignavimus visioni, solus factus est in pace locus iste. (SC 23 VI 16; SBOP I: 150)

[p.56]

INTRODUXIT ME REX IN CELLARIA SUA. Ecce unde odor, ecce quam curritur. Ergo ad cellaria curritur, et curritur in odo qui ex ipsis procedit, sponsa illum solita sua sagacitate praesentiente, et cupiente in ipsius plenitudinem introduci. (SC 23 I 1; SBOP I: 138)

Illuc ergo pariter currunt. Qui? Spiritu ferventes animae. Currit sponsa, currunt adolescentulae; sed quae amat ardentius currit velocius et citius pervenit. Pervenienti, non dico repulsionem, sed nec cunctationem patitur. Sine mora aperitur ei, tamquam domesticae, tamquam carissimae, tamquam specialiter dilectae et singulariter gratae. (SC 23 I 1; SBOP: 138)

[p.57]

Adolescentulae autem quid? Sequuntur a longe; neque enim, cum adhuc infirmas sint, pari possunt devotione cum sponsa currere, nec ipsius omnino imitari desiderium et fervorem: ideoque tardius pervenientes, fori remanent. (SC 23 I 1; SBOP: 138)

[p.58]

Oportet denique eam sponsum suum imitari, et petentem nimirum caelos, et nihilominus in terris cum suis se fore usque ad consummationem saeculi pollicentem. Sic et ista, quantumvis proficiat, quamlibet promoveatur, cura, providentia atque affectu ab his, quas in Evangelio genuit, numquam amovetur, numquam sua viscera obliviscitur. (SC 23 I 1; SBOP I: 139)

[p.59]

EXULTABIMUS ET LAETABIMUR IN TE..MEMORES UBERUM TUORUM, hoc est: 'Aequaminitus sustinemus dum venias, scientes te plenis ad nos reversuram uberibus'. Dicat itaque eis: 'Gaudete, confidite: INTRODUXIT ME REX IN CUBICULUM SUUM; putate et vos pariter introductas. Sola introducta videor, sed soli non proderit. (SC 23 I 2; SBOP I: 139)

[p.61]

Tempore nempe suo, rorantibus caelis desuper et nubibus pluentibus iustum, aperta est terra et germinavit Salvatorem, per quem facta est caeli et terrae reconciliatio. Ipse est enim pax nostra, qui fecit utraque unum, pacificans in sanguine suo quae in terris sunt et quae in caelo. (SC 23 II 4; SBOP I: 141)

[p.63]

Nec debet omnino praeesse aliis qui in eam necdum meruit introduci. Oportet prorsus hoc vino aestuet qui aliis praesidet, quemadmodum Doctor gentium aestuabat, quando dicebat: QUIS INFIRMATUR, ET EGO NON INFIRMOR? QUIS SCANDALIZATUR, ET EGO NON UROR? Alioquin improbe satis praeesse affectas, quibus prodesse non curas, et quorum non zelas salutem, subiectionem nimis ambitiose vindicas tibi. Hanc ego cellam quoque Gratiae nominavi: non quod absque gratia vel reliquas duas obtinere quis possit, sed ob plenitudinem quae singulariter in ista percipitur. Denique PLENITUDO LEGIS EST CARITAS; et QUI DILIGIT FRATREM, LEGEM IMPLEVIT. (SC 23 III 7; SBOP I: 143)

[p.64]

Optimum autem in moribus dixerim, et summam disciplinae huius perfecte apprehendisse, cui totas has cellas absque offenculo percurrere et circuire donatum est: qui in nullo prorsus aut resistat prioribus, aut invidet paribus, aut subiectis vel

desit in cura, vel in superbia praesit, praelatis oboediens, sociis congruens, utiliter subditis condescendens: quod quidem perfectionis insigne haud dubius sponsae annuerim. Innuit hoc etiam sermo quem dixit, quia **INTRODUXIT ME REX IN CELLARIA SUA**, dum non in unam aliquam cellam, sed in cellaria pluraliter se introductam ostendit. (SC 23 III 8; SBOP I: 144)

[p.65]

Iam ad cubiculum veniamus. Quid et istud? Et id me praesumo scire quid sit? (SC 23 IV 9; SBOP I: 144)

[p.66–8]

Minime mihi tantae rei arrego experientiam, nec gloriior in praerogativa quae soli servatur beatæ sponsae, cautus, iuxta illud Graecorum, scire meipsum, **UT SCIAM** etiam cum Propheta **QUID DESIT MIHI**. Tamen si nihil omnino scirem, nihil dicerem. Quod scio, non invideo vobis, nec subtrahō; quod nescio, doceat vos qui docet hominem scientiam. (SC 23 IV 9; SBOP I: 144)

[p.69–70]

Dixi, et meministis, in theoricæ contemplationis arcano Regis esse quaerendum cubiculum. Sed quomodo de unguentis dixisse me scio, multa videlicet et diversa penes sponsum ea esse, nec omnia praesto omnibus, sed sua quibusque pro diversitate indulta meritorum, sic quoque non unum puto cubiculum Regi esse, sed plura. Nam nec una est regina profecto, sed plures; et concubinae sunt multae, et adolescentularum non est numerus. Et unaquaeque invenit secretum sibi cum sponso, et dicit: **SECRETUM MEUM MIHI, SECRETUM MEUM MIHI**. Non omnibus uno in loco frui datur grata et secreta sponsi praesentia, sed ut cuique paratum est a Patre ipsius. Non enim, nos eum elegimus, sed ipse elegit nos, et posuit nos, et ubi ab eo quisque positus est, ibi est. Denique mulier una compuncta secus pedes Domini Iesu sortita est locum, cum altera suae devotionis fructum ad caput invenerit, si tamen altera. Porro Thomas in latere, Ioannes in pectore, Petrus in sinu Patris, Paulus in tertio caelo, secreti huius sunt gratiam assecuti.

Quis nostrum digne distinguere sufficiat has varietates meritorum, vel potius praemiorum? Ne omnino tamen praeteriisse quod ipsi novimus videamur, prior mulier stravivit sibi in tuto humilitatis, posterior in solio spei, Thomas in solido fidei, Ioannes in lato caritatis, Paulus in intimo sapientiae, Petrus in luce veritatis. Sic ergo apud sponsum mansiones multae sunt; et sive regina, sive concubina, sive etiam sit de numero adolescentularum, congruum quaeque pro meritis accipit locum terminumque, quousque liceat sibi contemplando procedere, et introire in gaudium Domini sui, et rimari dulcia secreta sponsa. Quod suo loco distinctius, quantum dignabitur ipse suggerere, demonstrare conabor. Nunc vero id nosse sufficiat, nulli adolescentularum, nulli concubinarum, nulli vel reginarum patere omnino accessum ad secretum illud cubiculi, quod suae illi columbae, formosae, perfectae, uni, unicuique sponsus servat. Unde nec ego sane indignor, si non ad illud admittor, praesertim cum constet mihi ne ipsam quidem sponsam interim adhuc ad omne quod vult pervenire secretum. Denique et flagitat indicari sibi ubi pascat, ubi cubet in meridie. (SC 23 IV 9–10; SBOP I: 144–5)

[p.75]

Sed audite quousque pervenerim, aut me pervenisse putaverim. Neque enim iactantiae deputandum est, quod in vestros pando profectus. Est locus apud sponsum... (SC 23 IV 11; SBOP I: 145)

[p.76]

Est locus apud sponsum, de quo sua iura decernit et disponit consilia ipse universitatis gubernator, leges constituens omni creaturae, pondus, et mensuram, et numerum. Est locus iste altus et secretus, sed minime quietus. Nam etsi ipse, quantum in se est, disponit omnia suaviter, disponit tamen; et contemplantem, qui forte eo loci pervenerit, quiescere non permittit; sed mirabiliter, quamvis delectabiliter, rimantem et admirantem fatigat, redditque inquietum. Pulchre utrumque in consequentibus sponsa exprimit, et delectationem videlicet istiusmodi contemplationis, et inquietudinem, ubi et se dormire, et cor suum vigilare fatetur. Nam in somno quidem suavissimi stuporis placidaeque admirationis sentire quietem, in vigiliis vero inquietae nihilominus curiositatis ac laboriosae exercitationis pati se fatigationem significat. Hinc beatus Iob: SI DORMIERO, ait, DICO: QUANDO CONSURGAM? ET RURSUM EXSPECTABO VESPERAM. Sentisne in his verbis sanctam animam velle interdum molestam quodammodo declinare suavitatem, eandemque rursum suavam molestiam affectare? Non enim dixisset: QUANDO CONSURGAM? si ex toto ei quies illa suae contemplationis placuisset; sed et si ex toto displicuisset, non denuo exspectasset horam quietis, id est vesperam. Non igitur locus iste cubiculi, ubi nequaquam per omnem modum quiescitur. (SC 23 IV 11; SBOP I: 145–6)

[p.78–9]

Est item locus, de quo super rationalem, reprobam quidem, creaturam immobilis vigilat secretissima et severissima animadversio iusti iudicis Dei, terribilis in consiliis super filios hominum. Cernitur, inquam, a timorato contemplatore hoc loco Deus, iusto sed occulto iudicio suo, reproborum nec diluens mala, nec acceptans bona, insuper et corda indurans, ne forte doleant et resipiscant, et convertantur et sanet eos. Et hoc non absque certa et aeterna ratione: quod tanto formidolosius constat esse, quanto immobilis fixum exstat in aeternitate. Pavendum valde quod in Propheta de huiusmodi legimus, ubi loquens ad angelos suos Deus sic ait: MISEREAMUR IMPIO. QUIBUS paventibus atque quaerentibus: NON ERGO DISCET FACERE IUSTITIAM? NON, inquit; subdensque causam: IN TERRA, ait, SANCTORUM INIQUA GESSIT, ET NON VIDEBIT GLORIAM DOMINI. (SC 23 V 12; SBOP I: 146)

[p.80]

Terribilis est locus iste, et totius expers quietis. Totus inhorui, si quando in eum raptus sum, illam apud me replicans cum tremore sententiam: QUIS SCIT SI EST DIGNUS AMORE AN ODIO? Nec mirum, si titubo ego ibi, folium utique quod vento rapitur et stipula sicca, ubi et maximus contemplator suos quoque fatetur pene motos fuisse pedes, pene fusos gressus; et dicebat: ZELAVI SUPER INIQUOS, PACEM PECCATORUM VIDENS. (SC 23 V 13; SBOP I: 147)

[p.82–3]

Sed est locus ubi vere quiescens et quietus cernitur Deus: locus omnino, non iudicis, non magistri, sed sponsi, et qui mihi quidem,—nam de aliis nescio,—plane cubiculum sit, si quando in illum contigerit introduci. Sed, heu! rara hora et parva mora! Clare ibi agnoscitur MISERICORDIA DOMINI AB AETERNO ET USQUE IN AETERNUM SUPER TIMENTES EUM. Et felix qui dicere potest: PARTICEPS EGO SUM OMNIUM TIMENTIUM TE, ET CUSTODIENTIUM MANDATA TUA. Stat propositum Dei, stat sententia pacis super timentes eum, ipsorum et dissimulans mala, et remunerans bona, ut miro modo eis non modo bona, sed et mala cooperentur in bonum. O solus vere BEATUS, CUI NON IMPUTABIT DOMINUS PECCATUM! Nam qui non habebit peccatum, nemo. OMNES ENIM PECCAVERUNT, ET

OMNES EGENT GLORIA DEI. QUIS ACCUSABIT tamen ADVERSUS ELECTOS DEI? Vidi haec, et intellexi illius sententiae veritatem: OMNIS QUI NATUS EST EX DEO, NON PECCAT, QUIA GENERATIO CAELESTIS SERVAT EUM. Generatio caelestis aeterna praedestinatio est, qua electos suos Deus dilexit et gratificavit in dilecto Filio suo ante mundi constitutionem, sic in sancto apparentes sibi, ut viderent virtutem suam et gloriam suam, quo eius forent consortes hereditatis, cuius et apparerent conformes imaginis. Hos ergo adverti quasi numquam peccasse: quoniam etsi qua deliquisse videntur in tempore, non apparent in aeternitate, quia caritas Patris ipsorum cooperit multitudinem peccatorum. Et dixi beatos, QUORUM REMISSAE SUNT INIQUITATES ET QUORUM TECTA SUNT PECCATA, cum subito tanta mihi quoque de me suborta fiducia et infusa laetitia est, quantus certe in loco horroris, id est in loco secundae visionis, non praecesserat timor, ita ut mihi visus sim tamquam unus ex illis beatis esse. O si durasset! Iterum, iterumque VISITA ME, DOMINE, IN SALUTARI TUO, AD VIDENDUM IN BONITATE ELECTORUM TUORUM, AD LAETANDUM IN LAETITIA GENTIS TUAЕ. (SC 23 VI 15; SBOP I: 148)

Chapter Three

[p.86]

Duodecimus humilitatis gradus est, si non solum corde monachus, sed etiam ipso corpore humilitatem videntibus se semper indicet: id est, in opere Dei, in oratorio, in monasterio, in horto, in via, in agro vel, ubicumque sedens, ambulans vel stans inclinato sit semper capite defixis in terram aspectibus, reum se omni hora de peccatis suis aestimans iam se tremendo iudicio repraesentari aestimet, dicens in corde suo semper illud quod publicanus ille evangelicus fixis in terram oculis dixit: 'Domine, non sum dignus ego peccator levare oculos meos ad caelos': et item cum Propheta: 'Incurvatus sum et humiliatus sum usquequaque'. (*Regula Benedicti* c. 7; Vogüé: 488)

Primus itaque humilitatis gradus est, si timorem Dei sibi ante oculos semper ponens, oblivionem omnino fugiat et semper sit memor omnium quae praecepit Deus... (*Regula Benedicti* c. 7; Vogüé: 474)

[p.91]

Cum autem caritas foras hunc misisset timorem, quo mihi timebam illudi de opere non consummando, subintravit alius timor de contrario, quo coepi timere gravius periculum de gloria si perfecissem, quam de ignominia si defecissem. Unde inter hunc timorem et caritatem, velut in quodam bivio positus, diu haesitavi, cui viarum tuto me crederem, metuens aut loquendo utiliter de humilitate, ipse humilis non inveniri aut tacendo humiliter, inutilis fieri. Cumque neutram tutam, alterutram tamen mihi tenendam esse conspicerem, elegi potius tibi, si quem possem, communicare fructum sermonis, quam tutari me solum portu silentii: simul fiduciam habens, si quid forte, quod approbes, dixerim, tuis precibus posse non superbire; sin autem—quod magis puto—nihil tuo studio dignum effecerim, de nihilo superbire non posse. (Hum praef.; SBOP III: 16)

[p.93]

INTRODUXIT ME REX IN CUBICULUM SUUM. Digna certe, quae de schola humilitatis, in qua primum sub magistro Filio ad seipsam intrare didicit... digna ergo quae de schola illa humilitatis, duce Spiritu Sancto, in cellaria caritatis per affectionem introduceretur...ad Regis demum cubiculum, cuius amore languet,

admitteretur. Ibi modicum, hora videlicet quasi dimidia, silentio facto in caelo, inter desideratos amplexus suaviter quiescens ipsa quidem dormit, sed cor eius vigilat, quo utique interim veritatis arcana rimatur, quorum postmodum memoria statim ad se reditura pascatur. (Hum VII 21; SBOP III: 32–3)

[p.95]

Unde, fratres, si summae humilitatis volumus culmen attingere et ad exaltationem illam caelestem, ad quam per praesentis vitae humilitatem ascenditur, volumus velociter pervenire, actibus nostris ascendentibus scala illa erigenda est quae in somnio Iacob apparuit, per quam ei descendentes et ascendentes angeli monstrabantur. Non aliud sine dubio descensus ille et ascensus a nobis intelligitur, nisi exaltatione descendere et humilitate ascendere. (*Regula Benedicti* c. 7; Vogüé: 474)

[p.100]

Si videris monachum, de quo prius confidebas, ubicumque stat, ambulat, sedet, oculis incipientem vagari, caput erectum, aures portare suspensas, e motibus exterioris hominis interiorem immutatum agnoscas. (Hum X 28; SBOP III: 38)

Audi, curiose, Salomonem; audi, stulte, Sapientem: OMNI CUSTODIA, inquit, CUSTODI COR TUUM, ut omnes videlicet sensus tui vigilant ad id, unde vita procedit, custodiendum. Quo enim a te, o curiose, recedis? Cui te interim committis? Ut quid audes oculos levare ad caelum, qui peccasti in caelum? Terram intueri, ut cognoscas te ipsum. Ipsa te tibi repraesentabit, quia terra es et in terram ibis. (Hum X 28; SBOP III: 38)

[p.101]

Inde fit ut pro mobiliate oculorum levigatus animus, nulla utique sui cura aggravatus, modo per superbiam ad alta se erigat, modo per invidiam in ima demergat: nunc per invidiam nequiter tabescit, nunc pro excellentia pueriliter hilarescit. In altero nequam, in altero vanus, in utroque superbus existit, quia et quod superari se dolet, et quod superare se gaudet, amor propriae excellentiae facit. Has autem animi vicissitudines nunc pauca et mordacia, nunc multa et inania, nunc risu, nunc luctu plena, semper vero irrationabilia indicant verba. (Hum XI 39; SBOP III: 46)

[p.101–2]

Sicque fit, ut quem sibi vicissim vindicabant gaudium et tristitia, sola possidere incipiat inepta laetitia. In hac autem tertium tibi gradum constituo: accipe quibus eam signis vel in te deprehendas, vel in altero. Illum qui eiusmodi est, aut raro, aut numquam gementem audies, lacrimantem videbis. Putes, si attendas, aut sui oblitum, aut ablutum a culpis. In signis scurrilitas, in fronte hilaritas, vanitas apparet in incessu. Pronus ad iocum, facilis ac promptus in risu. Cunctis quippe quae in se contemptibilia, et ideo tristia noverat, a memoria rasis, bonisque, si qua sentit in se, adunatis vel simulatis ante oculos mentis, dum nil cogitat nisi quod libet, nec attendit si licet, iam risum tenere, iam ineptam laetitiam dissimulare non valet. Ut enim vesica collecto turgida vento punctoque forata exiguo, si stringitur, crepitat dum detumescit, ac ventus egrediens non passim effusus, sed strictim emissus crebros quosdam sonitus reddit, sic monachus, ubi vanis scurrilibusque cor suum cogitationibus impleverit, propter disciplinam silentii non inveniens ventus vanitatis qua plenius egrediatur, inter angustias faucium per cachinnos excutitur. Saepe vultum pudibundus abscondit, claudit labia, dentes stringit; ridet tamen nolens, cachinnat invitus. Cumque os pugnīs obstruxerit suis, per nares adhuc sternutare auditur. (Hum XII 40; SBOP III: 47)

[p.102–3]

Plenus est enim sermonibus, et coarctat eum spiritus uteri sui. Esurit et sitit auditores, quibus suas iactitet vanitates, quibus omne quod sentit effundat, quibus qualis et quantus sit innotescat. Inventa autem occasione loquendi, si de litteris sermo exoritur, vetera proferuntur et nova; volant sententiae, verba resonant ampullosa. Praevenit interrogantem, non quaerenti respondet. Ipse quaerit, ipse solvit, et verba collocutoris imperfecta praecidit. Cum autem, pulsato signo, necesse est interrumpi colloquium, horam longam, breve queritur intervallum; quaerit licentiam ut ad fabulas revertatur post horam, non ut quempiam aedificet, sed ut scientiam iactet. Aedificare potest, sed non aedificare intendit. Non curat te docere vel a te doceri ipse quod nescit, sed ut scire sciatur quod scit. Quod si de religione agitur, statim visiones et somnia proferuntur. Deinde laudat ieiunia, commendat vigiliis, super omnia orationes exaltat; de patientia, de humilitate, aut de singulis virtutibus plenissime, sed vanissime disputat, ut tu scilicet, si audieris, dicas quod EX ABUNDANTIA CORDIS OS LOQUITUR, et quia BONUS HOMO DE BONO THESAURO SUO PROFERT BONA. Si ad ludicra sermo convertitur, in his quanto assuetior, tanto loquacior invenitur. Dicas, si audias, rivum vanitatis, fluvium esse scurrilitatis os eius, ita ut severos quoque et graves animos in levitatem concitet risus. Et ut totum in brevi colligam, in multiloquio nota iactantiam. (Hum XIII 41; SBOP III: 48)

[p.103–4]

Plus sibi blanditur de uno ieiunio, quod ceteris prandentibus facit, quam si cum ceteris septem dies ieiunaverit. Commodior sibi videtur una oratiuncula peculiaris, quam tota psalmodia unius noctis. Inter prandendum crebro solet oculos lactare per mensas, ut si quem minus comedere viderit, victum se doleat, et incipiat idipsum sibi crudeliter subtrahere, quod necessarium victui indulgendum praeviderat, plus gloriae metuens detrimentum quam famis cruciatum. Si quem macriorem, si quem pallidiorem perspexerit, vilem se aestimat, numquam requiescit. Et quoniam vultum ipse suum videre non potest, qualem scilicet se intuentibus offert, manus, quas potest, et brachia spectans, palpat costas, humeros attrectat et lumbos, ut secundum quod corporis sui membra, vel minus, vel satis exilia probat, pallorem ac colorem oris discernat. Ad omnia denique sua strenuus, ad communia piger. Vigilat in lecto, dormit in choro; cumque aliis psallentibus ad vigiliis tota nocte dormitet, post vigiliis, aliis in claustro quiescentibus, solus in oratorio remanet: excreat et tussit, gemitibus ac suspiriis aures foris sedentium de angulo implet. (Hum XIV 42; SBOP III: 49)

[p.104]

Aut enim dicit qui se excusat: 'Non feci', aut: 'Feci quidem, sed bene feci', aut si male: 'Non multum male'; aut si multum male: 'Non mala intentione'. (Hum XVII 45; SBOP III: 51)

[p.106]

Duas tibi vias videtur David proposuisse, sed unam noveris esse; ipsam tamen a se diversam, et diversis nominibus appellatam, aut iniquitatis propter descendentes, aut veritatis propter ascendentes, quia et fidem gradus sunt ascendentium in solum et descendendum, et eadem via accedentium ad civitatem et recedentium, et unum ostium est ingredientium domum et egredientium. Per unam denique scalam ascendentes angeli et descendentes Iacob apparuerunt. Quo spectant haec? Ut videlicet si ad veritatem redire cupis, non necesse sit viam quaerere novam quam non nosti, sed notam qua descendisti: quatenus reciprocis gressibus tua ipse vestigia sequens, per eosdem gradus humiliatus ascendas, per quos superbiendo descenderas, ita ut qui

duodecimus superbiae fuit descendenti, primus humilitatis sit ascendenti; undecimus, inveniatur secundus; decimus, tertius; nonus, quartus; octavus, quintus; septimus, sextus; sextus, septimus; quintus, octavus; quartus, nonus; tertius, decimus; secundus, undecimus; primus, duodecimus. Quibus superbiae gradibus in te inventis, immo recognitis, iam non laboras in quaerendo viam humilitatis. (Hum XIX 27; SBOP III: 37)

[p.106–7]

Dicis forsitan, frater Godifride, me aliud quam tu quaesisti, quam ipse promisi, tandem exhibuisse, cum pro gradibus humilitatis, superbiae gradus videar descripsisse. Ad quod ego: non potui docere nisi quod didici. Non putavi congruum me describere ascensiones, qui plus descendere quam ascendere novi. Proponat tibi beatus Benedictus gradus humilitatis, quos ipse prius in corde suo disposuit; ego quid proponam non habeo, nisi ordinem meae descensionis. In quo tamen, si diligenter inspicitur, via forsitan ascensionis reperitur. Si enim tibi Romam tendenti homo inde veniens obviaret, quaesitus viam, quid melius quam illam, qua venit, ostenderet? Dum castella, villas et urbes, fluvios ac montes, per quos transierit, nominat, suum denuntians iter, tuum tibi praenuntiat, ita ut eadem loca recognoscas eundo, quae ille pertransiit veniendo. In hac similiter nostra descensione gradus ascensorios fortasse reperies, quos ascendendo melius tu in tuo corde quam in nostro codice leges. (Hum XXII 57; SBOP III: 58–9)

[p.109]

Bona tamen via humilitatis, qua veritas inquiritur, caritas acquiritur, generationes sapientiae participantur. Denique sicut finis legis Christus, sic perfectio humilitatis cognitio veritatis. Christus, cum venit, attulit gratiam. Veritas quibus innotuerit, dat caritatem; innotescit autem humilibus: HUMILIBUS ergo DAT GRATIAM. (Hum II 5; SBOP III: 20)

[p.110]

Observe sicut numerum, ita et ordinem. Primo te doceat Veritas ipsa, quod prius in proximis quam in sui debeat inquiri natura. Post haec accipies, cur prius in te quam in proximis inquirere debeas. (Hum III 6; SBOP III: 20)

[p.111]

Sed forte durum tibi videtur, quod dixi Dei sapientiam Christum didicisse misericordiam, quasi is per quem omnia facta sunt, aliquid aliquando ignorasset ex his quae sunt, maxime cum illud quod ex epistola ad Hebraeos ad id comprobandum commemoravi, alio sensu, qui non ita videatur absurdus, possit intelligi, ut hoc quod dictum est: DIDICIT, non ad ipsum caput referatur in sui persona, sed ad corpus eius, quod est Ecclesia, et sit ita sensus: ET DIDICIT EX HIS QUAE PASSUS EST OBOEDIENTIAM, hoc est: oboedientiam didicit in suo corpore EX HIS QUAE PASSUS EST in capite. Nam illa mors, illa crux, opprobria, sputa, flagella, quae omnia caput nostrum Christus pertransiit, quid aliud corpori eius, id est nobis, quam praeclara oboedientiae documenta fuerunt? (Hum III 7; SBOP III: 21)

Quo quidem experimento non dico ut sapientior efficeretur, sed propinquior videretur, quatenus infirmi filii Adam, quos suos fieri et appellari fratres non dedignatus est, suas illi infirmitates committere non dubitarent, qui sanare illas et posset ut Deus, et vellet ut proximus, et cognosceret ut eadem passus. (Hum III 9; SBOP III: 23)

[p.112]

Amor vero, sicut nec odium, veritatis iudicium nescit. Vis iudicium Veritatis audire? SICUT AUDIO, SIC IUDICO: non sicut odi, non sicut amo, non sicut timeo. Est iudicium odii, ut illud: NOS LEGEM HABEMUS, ET SECUNDUM LEGEM NOSTRAM DEBET MORI. Est et timoris, ut illud: SI DIMITTIMUS EUM SIC, VENIENT ROMANI ET TOLLENT NOSTRUM LOCUM ET GENTEM. Iudicium vero amoris, ut David de filio parricida: PARCITE, inquit, PUERO ABSALON. Et legibus humanis statutum, et in causis, tam ecclesiasticis quam saecularibus servatum scio, speciales amicos causantium non debere admitti ad iudicium, ne vel fallant vel fallantur amore suorum. Quod si culpam amici tuo iudicio amor illius aut minuit, aut prorsus abscondit, quanto magis amor tui tuum contra te iudicium fallit? (Hum IV 14; SBOP III: 27)

[p.114]

Dei quippe Filius, Verbum scilicet ac sapientia Patris, primum quidem illam animae nostram potentiam, quae ratio dicitur, cum reperit carne depressam, peccato captivam, ignorantia caecam, exterioribus deditam, clementer assumens, potenter erigens, prudenter instruens, introrsum trahens, ac mirabiliter utens tamquam pro se vicaria, ipsam sibi indicem statuit, ita ut pro reverentia Verbi cui coniungitur, ipsa sui accusatrix, testis et iudex, contra se Veritatis fungatur officio. Ex qua prima coniunctione Verbi et rationis, humilitas nascitur. (Hum VII 21; SBOP III: 32)

[p.116]

Ut videlicet si tantus Apostolus raptum se dicit fuisse, quo nec doctus scivit, nec ductus potuit ire, me, qui procul dubio minor sum Paulo, ad tertium caelum nulla mea virtute, nullo meo labore pervenire posse praesumam, ne vel de virtute confidam, vel pro labore diffidam...

Unde nimirum colligo, quod quia Pater non descendit, Apostolus, ut eum videret, ad tertium caelum ascendere quidem non potuit, quo tamen se raptum memoravit. Denique: NEMO ASCENDIT IN CAELUM, NISI QUI DESCENDIT DE CAELO... Quos ergo ad primum caelum per humilitatem Filius vocat, hos in secundo per caritatem Spiritus aggregat, ad tertium per contemplationem Pater exaltat. Primo humiliantur in veritate, et dicunt: IN VERITATE TUA HUMILIASTI ME. Secundo congaudent veritati, et psallunt: ECCE QUAM BONUM ET QUAM IUCUNDUM, HABITARE FRATRES IN UNUM, de caritate quippe scriptum est: CONGAUDET AUTEM VERITATI. Tertio ad arcana veritatis rapiuntur, et aiunt: SECRETUM MEUM MIHI, SECRETUM MEUM MIHI. (Hum VIII 22–23; SBOP III: 33–5)

[p.117]

Sed quid ego miser, superflua magis loquacitate quam spiritus vivacitate, duos caelos superiores percurro, qui manibus pedibusque repens adhuc sub inferiore laboro? Ad quod tamen iam, ipso iuvante, quo et vocante, mihi scalam erexi. Illic siquidem iter est, quo ostendat mihi salutare Dei. Iam Dominum desuper innixum suspicio, iam ad vocem Veritatis exulto. Vocavit me, et ego respondi illi: OPERI MANUUM TUARUM PORRIGES DEXTERAM.

Tu quidem, Domine, gressus meos dinumeras, sed ego lentus ascensor, fessus viator, diverticula quaero. Vae mihi, si tenebrae me comprehendant, aut si mea fuga fiat in hieme, vel in sabbato, dum nunc ad lucem, cum tempus acceptabile et dies salutis sunt, proficisci dissimulo. Quid moror? Ora pro me, fili, frater, socie, et particeps profectus mei, si quis est, in Domino. Ora Omnipotentem, quatenus sic pigrum roboret pedem, ut tamen non veniat mihi pes superbiae. (Hum IX 24; SBOP III: 35)

[p.118]

O quam salubrius ad tactum Angeli nervus femoris Iacob emarcuit, quam angeli superbientis intumuit, evanuit, ruit. Utinam et meum nervum Angelus tangat ut marcescat, si forte ex hac infirmitate incipiam proficere, qui ex mea firmitate non possum nisi deficere. (Hum IX 25; SBOP III: 35)

QUIS DABIT MIHI PENNAS SICUT COLUMBAE, quibus celerius vocem ad veritatem, ut iam requiescam in caritate? Quae quoniam desunt, DEDUC ME, DOMINE, IN VIA TUA, ET INGREDIAR IN VERITATE TUA, et veritas liberabit me. Vae mihi quod de illa descendi. Nisi enim prius leviter, inaniter descendissem, in ascendendo tamdiu, tam graviter non laborassem. (Hum IX 26; SBOP III: 36)

[p.119]

Mortuum autem dixerim illum, qui sua peccata defendens, in octavum iam corrui gradum. A mortuo enim, tamquam qui non est, perit confessio. Post decimum vero, qui tertius est ab octavo, iam effertur in libertatem peccandi, quando expellitur a consortio monasterii. At postquam quartum transierit, iam recte quatruiduanus dicitur, dum in quintum decidens per consuetudinem sepiluitur. (Hum XXII 55; SBOP III: 57-8)

[p.120-1]

Pro tali iam, inquit Ioannes apostolus, non dico ut quis oret. Sed numquid dicis, o Apostole, ut quis desperet? Immo gemat qui illum amat. Non praesumat orare, nec desistat plorare. Quid est quod dico? An forte ullum remanet spei refugium, ubi oratio non invenit locum? Audi credentem, sperantem, nec tamen orantem: DOMINE, inquit, SI FUISSES HIC, FRATER MEUS NON FUISSET MORTUUS. Magna fides, qua credit sua praesentia Dominum mortem prohibere potuisse, si adfuisset. Modo autem quid? Absit ut quem credidit vivum potuisse servare, mortuum dubitet posse resuscitare: SED ET NUNC, inquit, scio, QUIA QUAECUMQUE POPOSCE- RIS A DEO, DABIT TIBI DEUS. Deinde quaerenti ubi posuissent eum, respondet: VENI ET VIDE. Quamobrem? O Martha, magna nobis fidei tuae insignia tribuis; sed quomodo cum tanta fide diffidis? VENI, inquis, ET VIDE. Cur, si non desperas, non sequeris, et dicis: 'Et resuscita'? Si autem desperas, cur magistrum sine causa fatigas? An forte fides aliquando recipit, quod oratio non praesumit? Denique appropinquantem cadaveri prohibes, et dicis: DOMINE IAM FOETET: QUATRIDUANUS ENIM EST. Desperando dicis hoc, an dissimulando? Sic quippe ipse Dominus post resurrectionem finxit se longius ire, cum mallet cum discipulis remanere. O sanctae mulieres Christi familiares, si fratrem vestrum amatis, cur eius misericordiam non flagitatis, de cuius potentia dubitare, pietate diffidere non potestis? Respondent: 'Sic melius tamquam non orantes oramus, sic efficacius quasi diffidens confidimus. Exhibemus fidem, perhibemus affectum: scit ipse, cui non est opus ut aliquid dicatur, quid desideremus. Scimus quidem quod omnia potest; sed hoc tam grande miraculum, tam novum, tam inauditum, etsi subest potentiae, multum tamen excedit universa merita humilitatis nostrae. Sufficit nobis potentiae locum, pietati dedidisse occasionem, malentes patienter expectare quid velit, quam impudenter quaerere quod forsitan nolit. Denique quod nostris meritis deest, verecundia quaerere quod forsitan nolit.' (Hum XXII 52; SBOP III: 55-6)

Chapter Four

[p.146–8]

Audisti quia concipies et paries filium; audisti quod non per hominem, sed per Spiritum Sanctum. Expectat Angelus responsum; tempus est enim ut revertatur ad eum qui misit illum. Expectamus et nos verbum miserationis, o Domina, quos miserabiliter premit sententia damnationis. Et ecce offertur tibi pretium nostrae salutis: statim liberabimur, si consentis. In sempiterno Dei Verbo facti sumus omnes, et ecce morimur; in tuo brevi responso sumus reficiendi, ut ad vitam revocemur. Hoc supplicat a te, o pia Virgo, flebilis Adam cum misera sobole sua exsul de paradiso. Hoc Abraham, hoc David, hoc ceteri flagitant sancti Patres, patres scilicet tui, qui et ipsi habitant in regione umbrae mortis. Hoc totus mundus, tuis genibus provolutus, expectat: nec immerito, quando ex ore tuo pendet consolatio miserorum, redemptio captivorum, liberatio damnatorum, salus denique universorum filiorum Adam, totius generis tui. Da, Virgo, responsum festinanter. O Domina, responde Verbum, quod terra, quod inferi, quod expectant et superi. Ipse quoque omnium Rex et Dominus quantum concupivit decorem tuum, tantum desiderat et responsionis assensum, in qua nimirum proposuit salvare mundum. Et cui placuisti in silentio, iam magis placebis ex verbo, cum ipse tibi clamet e caelo: ‘O PULCHRA INTER MULIERES, FAC ME AUDIRE VOCEM TUAM.’ Si ergo eum tu facias audire vocem tuam, ipse te faciet videre salutem nostram. Numquid non hoc est quod quaerebas, quod gemebas, quod diebus et noctibus orando suspirabas? Quid igitur? Tu es cui hoc promissum est, an aliam expectamus? Immo tu ipsa, non alia. Tu, inquam, illa promissa, illa expectata, illa desiderata, ex qua sanctus pater tuus Iacob, iam morti appropinquans, vitam sperabat aeternam, cum dicebat: EXPECTABO SALUTARE TUUM, DOMINE, in qua denique et per quam Deus ipse Rex noster ante saecula disposuit operari salutem in medio terrae. Quid ab alia speras, quod tibi offertur? Quid per aliam expectas, quod per te mox exhibebitur, dummodo praebeas assensum, respondeas verbum? Responde itaque citius Angelo, immo per Angelum Domino. Responde verbum et suscipe Verbum: profer tuum et concipe divinum; emitte transitorium et amplectere sempiternum. Quid tardas? Quid trepidas? Crede, confitere et suscipe. Sumat humilitas audaciam, verecundia fiduciam. Nullatenus convenit nunc, ut virginalis simplicitas obliviscatur prudentiam. In hac sola re ne timeas, prudens Virgo, praesumptionem, quia etsi grata in silentio verecundia, magis tamen nunc in verbo pietas necessaria. Aperi, Virgo beata, cor fidei, labia confessioni, viscera Creatori. Ecce desideratus cunctis gentibus foris pulsat ad ostium. O si, te morante, pertransierit, et rursus incipias dolens quaerere quem diligit anima tua! Surge, curre, aperi! Surge per fidem, curre per devotionem, aperi per confessionem! (Miss 4 IV 8; SBOP IV: 53–4)

[p.148–9]

Quae est ista quae ascendit sicut aurora consurgens, pulchra ut luna, electa ut sol, terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata?...Revertere, revertere, ut intueamur te...Unguentum effusum est nomen tuum... Nigra sum, sed formosa, filiae Jerusalem; ideo dilexit me Rex, et introduxit me in cubicula sua...Laeva eius sub capite meo, et dextera illius amplexabitur me. (*Liber responsalis: Responsoria sive Antiphonae de Assumptione sanctae Mariae*; PL 78: 799D–800A; *Corpus Antiphonarium Officii* vol. 3: 442S, 443A)

[p.150–1]

Luctare cum angelo, ne succumbas, quia REGNUM CAELORUM VIM PATITUR, ET VIOLENTI RAPIUNT ILLUD. Annon lucta: DILECTUS MEUS MIHI, ET EGO

ILLI? Notam fecit dilectionem suam; experiatur et tuam. In multis enim tentat te Dominus Deus tuus. Declinat saepius, avertit faciem, sed non in ira. Probationis istud est, non reprobationis. Sustinuit te dilectus; sustine tu dilectum, sustine, viriliter age. Non illum vicere peccata tua; te quoque ipsius flagella non superent, et obtinebis benedictionem. Sed quando? Cum aurora fuerit, cum aspiraverit iam dies, cum stabilierit Ierusalem laudem in terra. ECCE VIR, inquit, LUCTABATUR CUM IACOB USQUE MANE. AUDITAM FAC MIHI MANE MISERICORDIAM TUAM, QUIA IN TE SPERAVI, Domine. Non tacebo, nec tibi dabo silentium usque ad mane, utinam nec ieiunium. Nimirum dignaris et pasci, sed inter lilia. DILECTUS MEUS MIHI, ET EGO ILLI, QUI PASCITUR INTER LILIA. (Nat B.V.M. 16; SBOP V: 286)

[p.152]

Ne taceas, inquam, ne dederis silentium. Loquere, ut et ipse loquatur et dicere possit: DILECTUS MEUS MIHI, ET EGO ILLI. Iucunda vox et eloquium dulce. Nimirum non vox murmuris haec, sed vox turturis est. Et ne dixeris: QUOMODO CANTABIMUS CANTICUM DOMINI IN TERRA ALIENA? Non iam aliena reputabitur, de qua sponsus ait: VOX TURTURIS AUDITA EST IN TERRA NOSTRA. Audierat enim dicentem: CAPITE NOBIS VULPES PARVULAS et forte ex eo in vocem exultationis erupit, ut diceret: DILECTUS MEUS MIHI, ET EGO ILLI. (Nat B.V.M. 15; SBOP V: 285–6)

[p.153]

...DILECTUS MEUS MIHI, ET EGO ILLI. Plane vox turturis, quae tam viventi quam mortuo, singulari utique castimonia, suo compari perseverat, ut eam neque mors, neque vita a Christi separet caritate. Intuere etenim, utrumnam aliquid hunc dilectum avertere potuerit a dilecta, quominus ei et peccanti, et aversae perseveraret. Glomeratae nubes radios solis offundere contendebant, ut iniquitates nostrae separarent inter nos et Deum; sed incaluit Sol, et universa dissolvit. Alioquin quando rediisses ad eum, nisi ille tibi perseverasset, nisi clamasset; REVERTERE, SUNAMITIS, REVERTERE, REVERTERE, UT INTUEAMUR TE? Esto ergo illi et tu nihilominus perseverans, ut nullis ab eo flagellis aut laboribus avertaris. (Nat B.V.M. 15; SBOP V: 286)

[p.154]

QUAE PROCEDIT SICUT AURORA CONSURGENS, PULCHRA UT LUNA, ELECTA UT SOL. (Cant. 6,9)

[p.154–5]

Fecundae Virginis amplectitur caelum praesentiam, terra memoriam veneratur. Sic nimirum totius illic exhibitio, hic recordatio invenitur: ibi satietas, hic tenuis libatio primitiarum; ibi res, et hic nomen. DOMINE, inquit, NOMEN TUUM IN AETERNUM, ET MEMORIALE TUUM IN GENERATIONE ET GENERATIONEM. Generatio et generatio, non anglorum profecto, sed hominum est. Vis scire quia nomen et memoriale eius in nobis est, praesentia in excelso? SIC ORABITIS, inquit: PATER NOSTER, QUI EST IN CAELIS, SANCTIFICETUR NOMEN TUUM. Fidelis oratio, cuius ipsa primordia et divinae adoptionis, et terrae peregrinationis admoneant, ut hoc scientes, quod, quamdiu non sumus in caelo, peregrinamur a Domino, gemamus intra nosmetipsos, adoptionem filiorum expectantes, praesentiam utique Patris. Signanter proinde et de Christo Propheta loquitur dicens: SPIRITUS ANTE FACIEM NOSTRAM CHRISTUS DOMINUS; IN UMBRA EIUS VIVEMUS INTER GENTES. Nam inter caelestes quidem beatitudines non in umbra vivitur, sed

potius in splendore. IN SPLENDORIBUS SANCTORUM, inquit, EX UTERO ANTE LUCIFERUM GENUI TE. Verum id quidem Pater.

At Mater sane eundem ipsum splendorem genuit, sed in umbra, non nisi ea tamen obumbravit Altissimus. Merito proinde canit Ecclesia, non quidem Ecclesia Sanctorum, quae in excelsis et in splendore, sed quae interim peregrinatur in terris: SIC UMBRA EIUS QUEM DESIDERAVERAM SEDI, ET FRUCTUS EIUS DULCIS GUTTURI MEO. (Nat B.V.M. 1; SBOP V: 275–6)

[p.155]

Advocatum habere vis et ad ipsum? Ad Mariam recurre. Pura siquidem humanitas in Maria, non modo pura ab omni contaminatione, sed et pura singularitate naturae... Exaudiet utique Matrem Filius, et exaudiet Filium Pater. (Nat B.V.M. 7; SBOP V: 279)

[p.156]

Sed penes te est cogitatio tua, et quid cogites, nescimus. (Nat B.V.M. 10; SBOP V: 282)

Descendit itaque cogitatio pacis in opus pacis: VERBUM CARO FACTUM EST, et habitat iam in nobis. Habitat plane per fidem in cordibus nostris, habitat in memoria nostra, habitat in cogitatione, et usque ad ipsam descendit imaginationem. Quid enim prius cogitaret homo de Deo, nisi forsitan idolum corde fabricaretur? (Nat B.V.M. 10; SBOP V: 282)

[p.157]

Quidquid horum cogito, Deum cogito et per omnia ipse est Deus meus. Haec ergo meditari dixi sapientiam, et prudentiam iudicavi eructare memoriam suavitatis, quam in huiusmodi nucleis virga sacerdotalis copiose produxit, quam in supernis hauriens, uberius nobis Maria refudit. (Nat B.V.M. 11; SBOP V: 282)

[p.157–8]

De reliquo, fratres, curandum nobis summopere est, ne Verbum, quod de ore Patris ad nos egressum est Virgine mediante, vacuum revertatur, sed per eandem nihilominus Virginem gratiam pro gratia referamus. Eructemus memoriam, donec praesentiam suspiramus, et suae reddantur origini fluentia gratiae, ut uberius fluant. Alioquin nisi ad fontem redeant, exsiccantur, et infideles in modico, quod maximum est accipere non meremur. Modicum plane memoria ad praesentiam, modicum ad id quod cupimus, magnum ad id quod meremur; longe infra desiderium, sed nihilominus supra meritum. Sapienter proinde sponsa et pro hoc modico non modice gratulatur. Cum enim dixisset: INDICA MIHI UBI PASCAS, UBI CUBES IN MERIDIE, recipiens exigua pro immensis et pro pastu meridiano libans sacrificium vespertinum, minime tamen, ut solet fieri, murmurat aut tristatur, sed gratias agit et in omnibus sese exhibet devotiorem. Novit enim quod si fidelis fuerit in umbra memoriae, lucem praesentiae sine dubio obtinebit. (Nat B.V.M. 13; SBOP V: 283–4)

Chapter Five

[p.163]

Patres vocat eos, quos sanctitas, doctrina, et antiquitas commendat: doctrina, inquam, Scripturae et traditioni potius, quam rationibus philosophicis inhaerens...Patres vero

nonnisi quos recepta jamdudum auctoritas venerabilis fecit, et modus tractandi res, a philosophica ratione alienus. (J. Mabillon, Preface to the Works of Bernard of Clairvaux; PL 182: 25–6)

[p.166]

Et repetens eundem sermonem ac frequenter ingeminans: Pater, Pater, conversus ad sanctum abbatem et fratrem suum, exhilarata quidem facie: Quanta, inquit, dignatio Dei, patrem hominum esse! (*Exordium magnum*, Dist. III, c. 3; PL 185: 1054BC; Griesser: 154).

[p.166–7]

Funeri eius sanctus abbas et frater ipsius debitum commendationis et exsequiarum officium dulcissima mentis affectione devote impendit, cum tamen aliis flentibus ipse non fleret, sed erumpere gestientes lacrimas magna fidei constantia castigaret, ne quasi mortuum plangere et flere videretur illum, quem de morte sua in aeterna vita et gloria sempiterna natum esse non dubitat. (*Exordium magnum*, Dist. III, c. 3; PL 185: 1054C; Griesser: 154).

[p.171]

Fateor, victus sum. Exeat, necesse est, foras quod intus patior. (SC 26 II 3; SBOP I: 171)

Amarissima separatio, et quam non posset omnino efficere, nisi mors! Quando enim me vivus vivum desereres? Omnino opus mortis, horrendum divortium. Quis enim tam suavi vinculo mutui nostri non pepercit amoris, nisi totius suavitatis inimica mors? Bene mors, quae unum rapiendo, duos furiosa peremit. Annon mors etiam mihi? Immo plus mihi, cui utique omni morte infeliciores vita servata est. Vivo, ut vivens moriar: et hoc dixerim vitam?...Dura conditio, sed mea miseranda fortuna, non et illius! (SC 26 II 4; SBOP I: 172)

[p.172]

'Deus', inquit, 'tu scis, quod quantum in me fuit, semper optavi quietem mihi intendere, vacare tibi. Sed implicitum tenuit timor tuus, et voluntas fratrum, et studium oboediendi, super omnia abbatis pariter et fratris germana dilectio'. (SC 26 IV 6; SBOP I: 174)

[p.172–3]

Merito ex eo pendebar totus, qui mihi totum erat. Solum mihi paene reliquerat provisoris honorem et nomen, nam opus ipse faciebat. Ego vocitabar abbas, sed ille praeerat in sollicitudine. Merito requievit in illo spiritus meus, per quem licebat delectari in Domino, praedicare liberius, orare securius. Per te, inquam, mihi, mi frater, mens sobria et grata quies, sermo efficacior, oratio pinguior, frequentior lectio et ferventior affectus. (SC 26 V 7; SBOP I: 175–6)

[p.173]

Vivam, quoad vivam, in amaritudine, vivam in maerore: et haec sit mihi consolatio, ut maerendo affligar. Non parcam, et iuvabo manum Domini: etenim MANUS DOMINI TETIGIT ME. Me, inquam, tetigit et percussit, non illum, quem vocavit ad requiem: me occidit, cum succidit illum. Numquid enim occisum quis dixerit, quem plantavit in vita? Aut quod illi vitae ianua fuit, mihi plane est mors; meque illa morte mortuum dixerim, non hunc qui obdormivit in Domino. (SC 26 V 8; SBOP I: 176)

Videmus nempe mortuos quotidie plangere mortuos suos: fletum multum, et fructum nullum. (SC 26 VI 8; SBOP I: 176)

[p.174]

Affectum confessus sum, et non negavi. Carnalem quis dixerit? Ego humanum non nego, sicut nec me hominem. Si ne hoc sufficit, nec carnalem negaverim. Nam et ego carnalis sum, venundatus sub peccato, addictus morti, poenis et aerumnis obnoxius. Non sum, fateor, insensibilis ad poenas: mortem horreo meam et meorum. Meus Girardus erat, meus plane. An non meus, qui frater sanguine fuit, professione filius, sollicitudine pater, consors spiritu, intimus affectu? Is recessit a me: sentio, laesus sum, et graviter. (SC 26 VI 9; SBOP I: 177)

Tu dedisti Girardum, tu abstulisti: et si dolemus ablatum, non tamen obliviscimur quod datus fuit, et gratias agimus quod habere illum meruimus, quo carere in tantum non volumus, in quantum non expedit. (SC 26 VIII 13; SBOP I: 180)

[p.175]

Recordabor, Domine, pacti mei et miserationis tuae, ut magis iustificeris in sermonibus tuis, et vincas cum iudicaris. Cum pro causa Ecclesiae anno praeterito Viterbii essemus, aegrotavit ille, et invalescente languore, cum iam proxima vocatio videretur, ego aegerrime ferens comitem peregrinationis, et illum comitem, in terra relinquere aliena, nec resignare his qui mihi eum commiserant, quoniam amabatur ab omnibus, sicut erat amabilis valde, conversus ad orationem cum fletu et gemitu: 'Expecta', inquam, 'Domine usque ad reditum. Restitutum amicis tolle iam eum, si vis, et non causabor.' Exaudisti me, Deus: convaluit, opus perfecimus quod iniunxeras, redivimus cum exultatione, reportantes manipulos pacis nostros. Porro ego paene oblitus sum meae conventionis, sed non tu. Pudet singultum horum qui praevaricationis me arguunt. Quid plura? Repetisti commendatum, recepisti tuum. Finem verborum indicunt lacrimae; tu illis, Domine, finem modumque indixeris. (SC 26 VIII 14; SBOP I: 180–1)

[p.177]

Patefacta namque quadam parte operis prosecutione duos pene quaternos consumit. Quod iam ibi discrepans et inconcinnum fuerit, paucis expediam. Liber ille Salomonis in sancti Spiritus officina conflatus, Christi et Ecclesiae sub sponsi sponsaeque typo maritat amplexus. Porro nuptiis gaudia consonant. At Bernardus aut rerum obscurarum taedio victus, aut negligens Apostoli dictum suadentis gaudere cum gaudentibus, mortuum suum ducit ad nuptias: Cum scriptum sit; 'Non est deus mortuorum, sed viventium'. Discumbente itaque sponso in sponsae gremio, et juvenculis sponsi sponsaeque juvenculabus alterna iucunditate plaudentibus, tuba funebris subito clangit. Epulae in luctum eunt, organa vertuntur in funus. (*Apologeticus*; PL 178: 1863D–1864A)

[p.177–8]

Humano capiti cervicem pictor equinam
iungere si velit, et varias inducere plumas
undique collatis membris, ut turpiter atrum
desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne,
spectatum admissi risum teneatis, amici?...
...‘pictoribus atque poetis
quidlibet audendi semper fuit aequa potestas.’

(scimus, et hanc veniam petimusque damusque vicissim;)
sed non ut placidis coeant immitia, non ut
serpentes avibus gementur, tigribus agni... (*Ars poetica*)

[p.178]

Itaque Bernardus in hoc planctu adeo est vehemens, adeo pertinax, adeo vivus, ut legenti cuilibet constans sit eum non veros fletus edere, sed verba quibus veri questus exprimantur effundere. Aiunt tamen quidam insulsi, seductorio ejus linguae moderamine seducti, qui corpus verborum diligunt, animam autem rationis spernunt, eum tam facundia sublimi in lamentis illis uti, ut nulla modernae eloquentiae facultas ei exaequari...Sed non talibus instrumentis mortuus suscitatur, nec eloquentiae praestigiis vita mortuo comparatur. (*Apologeticus*; PL 178: 1865CD)

[p.181]

Quia debitis humanitatis officiis amicum revertentem in patriam prosecuti sumus, redeo, fratres, ad propositum aedificandi, quod intermiseram. Incongruum namque est diu flere laetantem, et sedenti ad epulas lacrimas multas ingerere importunum. Sed et si nostras defleamus aerumnas, ne id quidem oportet nimis, ne non tam amasse illum, quam nostra quaesisse de illo commoda videamur. Temperet sane dilecti gaudium maestitiam desolatorum, et tolerabilius fiat nobis quod nobiscum non est, quia cum Deo est. (SC 27 I 1; SBOP I: 181)

[p.184]

Sic, sic in caelo esse non ambigo, ut lego in terra, sentietque pro certo anima quod continet pagina, nisi quod non sufficit ista omnino exprimere, quantum capere illa tunc poterit, sed nec quantum iam potest. Quid putas illic accipiet, dei sinu foveri, Dei cura et studio custodiri, ne dormiens forte a quopiam, donec ultro evigilet, excitetur? (SC 52 I 2; SBOP II: 91)

[p.184–5]

Revera enim dormitio est, quae tamen sensum non sopiat, sed abducat. Est et mors, quod non dubius dixerim, quoniam Apostolus quosdam adhuc in carne viventes commendando sic loquitur: MORTUI ESTIS, ET VITA VESTRA ABSCONDITA EST CUM CHRISTO IN DEO. (SC 52 II 3; SBOP II: 92)

[p.185]

QUIS DABIT MIHI PENNAS SICUT COLUMBAE, ET VOLABO, ET REQUIESCAM? (Ps. 54,7)

[p.185–6]

Proinde et ego non absurde sponsae exstasim dixerim mortem, quae tamen non vita, sed vitae eripiat laqueis, ut possit dicere: ANIMA NOSTRA SICUT PASSER EREPTA EST DE LAQUEO VENANTIUM. Inter medios namque laqueos in hac vita inceditur, qui utique toties non timentur, quoties sancta aliqua et vehementi cogitatione anima a seipsa abripitur, si tamen eousque mente secedat et avolet, ut hunc communem transcendat usum et consuetudinem cogitandi; etenim FRUSTRA IACITUR RETE ANTE OCULOS PENNATORUM. Quid enim formidetur iuxuria, ubi nec vita sentitur? Excedente quippe anima, etsi non vita, certe vitae sensu, necesse est etiam ut nec vitae tentatio sentiat. QUIS DABIT MIHI PENNAS SICUT COLUMBAE, ET VOLABO, ET REQUIESCAM? Utinam hac morte ego frequenter cadam, ut evadam laqueos mortis, ut non sentiam vitae luxuriantis mortifera blandimenta, ut obstupescam ad sensum libidinis, ad aestum avaritiae, ad

iracundiae et impatientiae stimulos, ad angores sollicitudinum et molestias curarum! Moriatur anima mea morte iustorum, ut nulla illaqueet iniustitia, nulla oblectet iniquitas. Bona mors, quae vitam non aufert, sed transfert in melius; bona, qua corpus non cadit, sed anima sublevatur.

Verum hoc hominum est. Sed moriatur anima mea morte etiam, si dici potest, angelorum, ut praesentium memoria excedens, rerum se inferiorum corporearumque non modo cupiditatibus, sed et similitudinibus exuat, sitque ei pura cum illis conversatio, in quibus est puritatis similitudo. (SC 52 II 4–5; SBOP II: 92)

[p.187]

SUB UMBRA EIUS QUEM DESIDERAVERAM SEDI. Et Propheta: SPIRITUS, inquit, ANTE FACIEM NOSTRAM CHRISTUS DOMINUS, IN UMBRA EIUS VIVIMUS INTER GENTES. In umbra in gentibus, in luce cum angelis...Vides fidem et vitam esse, et vitae umbram. Nam e regione vita in deliciis agens, quoniam non est ex fide, et mors est, et umbra mortis....Denique SAPIENTIA CARNIS MORS. Sed et mortis est umbra, illius scilicet quae cruciat in aeternum. Sedimus et nos aliquando in tenebris et umbra mortis...Nunc autem de umbra mortis ad vitae transivimus umbram, magis autem translati sumus de morte in vitam, in Christi umbra viventes, si tamen viventes, et non mortui. (SC 48 III 6–7; SBOP II: 70–1; transl. Walsh 1979: 17–8)

[p.188]

Quod flens dico: quousque odoramus et non gustamus, prospicientes patriam et non apprehendentes, suspirantes et de longe salutantes? O Veritas, exsulum patria, exsiliis finis! Video te, sed intrare non sinor, carne retentus, sed nec dignus admitti, peccatis sordens. (SC 50 III 8; SBOP II: 83)

[p.189]

O Sapientia, quae attingis a fine usque ad finem fortiter in instituendis et continendis rebus, et disponis omnia suaviter in beandis et ordinandis affectibus! (SC 50 III 8; SBOP II: 83)

[p.190–3]

Sed est affectio quam caro gignit, et est quam ratio regit, et est quam condit sapientia. Prima est, quam Apostolus legi Dei dicit non esse subiectam, nec esse nec esse posse; secunda, quam perhibet, e regione, consentientem legi Dei, quoniam bona est: nec dubium distare a se contentiosam et consentaneam. Longe vero tertia ab utraque distat, quae et gustat, et sapit quoniam suavis est Dominus, primam eliminans, secundam remunerans. Nam prima quidem dulcis, sed turpis; secunda sicca, sed fortis; ultima pinguis et suavis est. Igitur per secundam opera sunt, et in ipsa caritas sedet: non illa affectualis, quae sale sapientiae condita pinguescens, magnam menti importat multitudinem dulcedinis Domini; sed quaedam potius actualis, quae etsi nondum dulci illo amore suaviter reficit, amore tamen amoris ipsius vehementer accendit. NOLITE, ait, DILIGERE VERBO NEQUE LINGUA, SED OPERE ET VERITATE. Vides quomodo caute medius incedit inter vitiosum atque affectuosum amorem, ab utroque pariter hanc distinguens actualem et salutiferam caritatem? Nec linguas mentientis in hac dilectione recipit fictum, nec rursum afficientis exigit sapientiae gustum. OPERE, inquit, DILIGAMUS ET VERITATE: quod videlicet moveamur ad bene operandum magis quadam vividae veritatis impulsu, quam sapidae illius caritatis affectu. ORDINAVIT IN ME CARITATEM. Quam putas harum? Utramque, sed ordine opposito. Nam actualis inferiora praefert, affectualis superiora. Etenim in bene affecta mente non dubium, verbi causa, quin dilectioni hominis Dei dilectio

praeponatur, et in hominibus ipsis perfectiores infirmioribus, caelum terrae, aeternitas temporis, anima carni. Attamen in bene ordinata actione saepe, aut etiam semper, ordo oppositus invenitur. Nam et circa proximi curam et plus urgemur, et pluries occupamur; et infirmioribus fratribus diligentiori sedulitate assistimus; et paci terrae magis quam caeli gloriae, iure huminitatis et ipsa necessitate intendimus; et temporalium inquietudine curarum vix aliquid sentire de aeternis permittitur; et languoribus nostri corporis, postposita animae cura, pene continue inservimus; et ipsis denique infirmioribus membris nostris abundantiorum honorem, iuxta sententiam Apostoli, circumdamus, per hoc quodammodo facientes verbum Domini, de quo habes: ERUNT NOVISSIMI PRIMI ET PRIMI NOVISSIMI. Orantem denique hominem Deo loqui quis dubitet? Quoties tamen inde, caritate iubente, abducimur et avellimur, propter eos qui nostra indigent opera vel loquela! Quoties pie cedit negotiorum tumultibus pia quies! Quoties bona conscientia ponitur codex, ut operi manuum insudetur! Quoties pro administrandis terrenis iustissime ipsis supersedemus celebrandis missarum solemniis! Ordo praeposterus; sed necessitas non habet legem. Agit ergo suum actualis caritas ordinem iuxta patrisfamilias iussionem, incipiens a novissimis, pia certe et iusta, quae non sit acceprix personarum, nec pretia consideret rerum, sed hominum necessitates.

At non ita affectualis; nam a primis ipsa ducit ordinem. Est enim sapientia, per quam utique quaeque res sapiunt prout sunt, ut, verbi gratia, quae plurius natura habet, plurius quoque ipsa affectio sentiat, minora minus, minima minime. Et illum quidem ordinem caritatis veritas facit, hunc autem veritatis caritas vindicat sibi. Nam et vera in hoc est caritas, ut qui indigent amplius, accipiant prius; et rursum in eo cara apparet veritas, si ordinem tenemus affectu, quem illa ratione.

Tu vero si diligas Dominum Deum tuum toto corde, tota anima, tota virtute tua, et amorem amoris illum, quo contenta est caritas actualis, affectu, ferventiori transiliens, ipso quominus divino amore, ad quem is est gradus, accepto in plenitudine Spiritu, totus ignescas, sapit tibi profecto Deus, etsi non digne omnino prout est, quod utique impossibile est omni creaturae, certe prout tuum sapere est. Deinde sapiens etiam ipse tu tibi prout es, cum te senseris nil habere prorsus unde te ames, nisi in quantum Dei es: quippe qui totum unde amas, in illum effuderis. Sapiens, inquam, tibi prout es, cum ipso experimento amoris tui et affectionis quam ad te ipsum habebis, nihil dignum te esse invenies quod vel a teipso ametur, nisi propter ipsum, qui sine ipso es nihil. (SC 50 II 4–III 6; SBOP II: 80–2)

[p.194–5]

Da mihi hominem, qui ante omnia quidem ex toto se diligit Deum; se vero et proximum, in quantum diligunt ipsum; inimicum autem, tamquam aliquando forsitan dilecturum; porro parentes carnis suae germanius propter naturam, spirituales vero eruditores suos profusius propter gratiam; atque in hunc modum ad cetera quoque Dei ordinato intendat amore, despiciens terram, suspiciens caelum, utens hoc mundo tamquam non utens, et inter utenda et fruenda intimo quodam mentis sapore discernens, et transitoria transitorie et ad id dumtaxat quod opus, et prout opus est, curet, aeterna desiderio amplectatur aeterno: talem, inquam, da mihi hominem, et ego audacter illum sapientem pronuntio, cui nimirum quaeque res revera sapiunt prout sunt, et in veritate atque securitate competit gloriari et dicere, quia ORDINAVIT IN ME CARITATEM. Sed ubi ille, aut quando ista? (SC 50 III 8; SBOP II: 82–3)

[p.195]

Subtractio nempe rei quam amas augmentatio desiderii est, et quod ardentius desideras, cares aegrius. (SC 51 I 1; SBOP II: 84)

[p.197–8]

Loquor vobis experimentum meum quod expertus sum. Si quando sane comperi profecisse aliquos vestrum ex meis monitis, tunc non me piguit, fateor, curam praetulisse sermonis proprio otio et quieti. Cum enim, verbi gratia, post sermonem iracundus quispiam reperitur mutatus in mitem, superbus in humilem, pusillanimis in fortem; porro mitis, humilis, fortis, in sua quisque gratia excrevisse, et seipso melior factus esse agnoscitur; sed et qui forte tepuerant et languebant circa spirituale studium, torpentes et dormitantes, ad ignitum eloquium Domini referbuisse et evigilasse videntur; et qui, deserto fonte sapientiae, foderant sibi propriae voluntatis cisternas, non valentes aquas continere, proptereaue, ad omne iniunctum gravati, corde arido murmurabant, nullum in se habentes devotionis humorem: hi, inquam, cum de rore verbi et pluvia voluntaria, quam segregavit Deus hereditati suae, refloruisse probantur in opera oboedientiae, facti in omnibus voluntarii et devoti, non est, dico vobis, unde subeat mentem, quasi pro intermisso studio iucundae contemplationis, tristitia, cum talibus fuero circumdatus floribus atque fructibus pietatis. Patienter avellor ab infecundae Rachelis amplexibus, ubi mihi exuberat fructus profectuum vestrorum. Minime prorsus pigebit me intermissae quietis pro cura sermonis, cum videro in vobis germinare semen meum, atque augeri incrementa frugum iustitiae vestrae. Caritas enim, quae non quaerit quae sua sunt, id mihi iamdudum facile persuasit, nil scilicet desiderabilium meorum vestris praeferre utilitatibus. Orare, legere, scribere, meditari, et si qua sunt alia spiritualis studii lucra, haec arbitratus sum propter vos detrimenta. (SC 51 II 3; SBOP II: 85–6)

[p.199]

Sunt tamen de hic sedentibus, qui utinam praesens capitulum attentius observarent. Cogitarent certe, quanta praepositis reverentia debeatur, quos temere inquietando, caeli quoque civibus se reddunt infensos, et nobis forte plusculum solito parcere demum inciperent, nec tam irreverenter leviterque se iam ingererent cum vacamus. Rara mihi satis ad feriandum a supervenientibus, ut bene norunt, conceditur hora, etiam cum ipsi in omni patientia me sustinebunt. (SC 52 IV 7; SBOP II: 94–5)

[p.202]

...mihi utilis in omnibus et prae omnibus fuit: utilis in parvis et in magnis, in privatis et publicis, foris et intus. Merito ex eo pendebam totus, qui mihi totum erat. Solum mihi paene reliquerat provisoris honorem et nomen, nam opus ipse faciebat. Ego vocitabar abbas, sed ille praecerat in sollicitudine. Merito requievit in illo spiritus meus, per quem licebat delectari in Domino, praedicare liberius, orare securius. (SC 26 V 7; SBOP I: 175–6)

[p.203]

Me, inquam, tetigit et percussit, non illum, quem vocavit ad requiem: me occidit, cum succidit illum. (SC 26 V 8; SBOP I: 176)

Chapter Six

[p.216–17]

Haec igitur nova quam antiqua ornamentorum discrimina ex ipsa matris ecclesiae affectione crebro considerantes, dum illam ammirabilem sancti Eligii cum minoribus crucem, dum incomparabile ornamentum, quod vulgo 'crista' vocatur, aureae arae superponi contueremur, corde tenus suspirando: 'Omnis', inquam, 'lapis preciosus operimentum tuum, sardius, topazius, jaspis, crisolitus, onix et berillus, saphirus,

carbunculus et smaragdus'. De quorum numero, praeter solum carbunculum, nullum deesse, imo copiosissime abundare, gemmarum proprietatem cognoscentibus cum summa ammiratione claret. Unde, cum ex dilectione decoris domus Dei aliquando multicolor, gemmarum speciositas ab exintrinsicis me curis devocaret, sanctorum etiam diversitatem virtutum, de materialibus ad immaterialia transferendo, honesta meditatio insistere persuaderet, videor videre me quasi sub aliqua extranea orbis terrarum plaga, quae nec tota sit in terrarum faece nec tota in coeli puritate, demorari, ab hac etiam inferiori ad illam superiorem anagogico more Deo donante posse transferri. (*De adminst.* c. 33; Panofsky 1973: 62–4)

[p.217]

Portarum quisque attollere quaeris honorem,
Aurum nec sumptus, operis mirare laborem.
Nobile claret opus, sed opus quod nobile claret
Clarificet mentes, ut eant per lumina vera
Ad verum lumen, ubi Christus ianua vera.
Quale sit intus in his determinat aurea porta:
Mens hebes ad verum per materialia surgit,
Et demersa prius hac visa luce resurgit. (*De adminst.* c. 27; Panofsky 1973: 46–9)

[p.219]

Saepe mihi cogitanti diligentiusque quantum vires suppetunt inquirenti rerum omnium quae vel animo percipi possunt vel intentionem eius superant primam summamque divisionem esse in ea quae sunt et in ea quae non sunt horum omnium generale vocabulum occurrit quod graece *fusis*, latine vero natura vocitatur. (*Periphyseon* I, c. 1; Sheldon-Williams: 36)

[p.230]

Illud autem interrogo monachus monachos, quod in gentilibus gentilis arguebat; DICITE, ait ille, PONTIFICES, IN SANCTO QUID FACIT AURUM? Ego autem dico: 'Dicite pauperes, si tamen pauperes, in sancto quid facit aurum?' Et quidem alia causa est episcoporum, alia monachorum. Scimus namque quod illi, sapientibus et insipientibus debitores cum sint. Carnalis populi devotionem, quia spiritualibus non possunt, corporalibus excitant ornamentis. Nos vero qui iam de populo exivimus, qui mundi quaeque pretiosa pro Christo reliquimus, qui omnia pulchre lucentia, canore mulcentia, suave olentia, dulce sapientia, tactu placentia, cuncta denique oblectamenta corporea arbitrati sumus ut stercora, ut Christum lucrifaciamus, quorum, quaeso, in his devotionem excitare intendimus? (Apo XII 28; SBOP III: 104–5)

Chapter Seven

[p.245]

Vigilantibus enim pastoribus et custodientibus vigilias noctis evangelizatur gaudium novae lucis, et eis natus dicitur esse Salvator: pauperibus atque laborantibus, non vobis divites, qui vestram habetis consolationem, et Vae divinum, inter ipsas noctis vigilias DIES SANCTIFICATUS ILLUXIT, et nox sicut dies illuminata, immo in diem mutata est, dicente angelo: QUIA NATUS EST VOBIS SALVATOR, hodie utique non hac nocte. Siquidem NOX PRAECESSIT, DIES AUTEM APPROPINQUAVIT, verus utique dies ex die, salutare Dei, Iesus Christus, Dominus noster, qui est super omnia Deus benedictus in saecula. Amen. (Nat 5 5; SBOP IV 269–70)

[p.245–46]

Grandis quidem est, dilectissimi, hodierna Domenicæ Nativitatis sollemnitas; sed dies brevis cogit brevare sermonem. Nec mirum, si facimus nos breve verbum, quando et Deus Pater Verbum fecit abbreviatum. Vultis nosse quam longum, quam breve fecit? CAELUM, inquit hoc verbum, ET TERRAM EGO IMPLEO; nunc caro factum, in angusto locatum praesepio est. A SAECULO, ait Propheta, ET IN SAECULUM TU ES DEUS: et ecce factus est infans diei unius. Ad quid hoc, fratres, aut quæ necessitas fuit, ut sic exinaniret se, sic humiliaret se, sic abbreviaret se dominus maiestatis, nisi ut vos similiter faciatis? (Nat 1 1; SBOP IV: 244–5)

[p.247]

Quid est Deus? LONGITUDO, inquam. Quid ipsa? Aeternitas. Haec tam longa, ut non habeat terminum, non magis loci quam temporis. Est et LATITUDO. Et ipsa quid? Caritas...evadit in infinitum. Omnem non modo affectionem, sed et cognitionem excedit...Quid plus dicam? Aeterna est...Deus aeternitas est, DEUS CARITAS EST: longitudo sine protensione, latitudo sine distensione. In utroque pariter locales quidem excedit temporalesque angustias, sed libertate naturae, non enormitate substantiae. Tali modo immensus est qui omnia fecit in mensura; et quamvis immensus, hic tamen modus et ipsius immensitas. (Csi V XIII 28; SBOP III: 491)

[p.252]

Neque enim his tantum profuit, quos tunc praesens invenit; sed fons est, qui numquam poterit exauriri. Fons nobis est Christus Dominus unde lavemur, sicut scriptum est: QUI DILEXIT NOS ET LAVIT NOS A PECCATIS NOSTRIS. (Nat 1 5; SBOP IV: 247)

[p.252–3]

Putas inveniri poterit quartus fons, ut paradisum recuperemus quattuor fontium irrigatione amoenissimum? Nam si terrenum paradisum denuo nobis reddendum non speramus, quomodo regnum caelorum sperabimus? SI TERRENA, inquit, DIXI VOBIS, ET NON CREDITIS, QUOMODO, SI DIXERO VOBIS CAELESTIA, CREDETIS? Nunc autem ut de exhibitione praesentium firma sit expectatio futurorum, paradisum habemus multo meliorem, et longe delectabiliorem, quam primi parentes habuerunt, et paradisus noster Christus Dominus est. (Nat 1 6; SBOP IV: 248–9)

[p.253]

Verum terra nostra nequaquam fertilis est huiusmodi seminis, bonae scilicet conversationis: peribit facile, facile contabescet, nisi crebris irrigationibus adiuvetur, ut merito in oratione Dominica huiusmodi gratiam sub quotidiani panis nomine postulemus. (Nat 1 7; SBOP IV: 250)

[p.255]

Vivebat adhuc, quando foderunt ei manus et pedes, ut quattuor nobis adhuc viventibus fontes ex seipso proferret; quintum pertulit vulnus cum iam exspirasset, ut in se nihilominus quintum nobis fontem post obitum aperiret. (Nat 1 8; SBOP IV: 250)

Sed dum loquimur de mysteriis Nativitatis, ad scrutanda repente devenimus sacramenta Dominicæ Passionis. Nec mirum tamen si quaerimus in Passione, quid in Nativitate sua Christus attulerit: tunc enim, conscisso sacco, pecuniam, quæ latebat, in pretium nostrae redemptionis effudit. (Nat 1 8; SBOP IV: 250–1)

[p.257]

Fulget in tenebris lux nova de caelo, gaudium magnum angelus evangelizat; laudat multitudo militiae caelestis; datur gloria deo, pax hominibus bonae voluntatis. Currunt pastores, inveniunt quod ad eos dictum est verbum, nuntiant aliis; quicumque audiunt, admirantur. (Nat 3 1; SBOP IV: 257)

[p.258]

Et ego agnosco mea esse nativitatis huius tempus et locum, infantilis corporis teneritudinem, parvuli vagitus et lacrimas, sed et ipsorum, quibus primo annuntiatur nativitas Salvatoris, paupertatem pastorum atque vigilias. Mea sunt haec, pro me faciunt, mihi apponuntur, mihi proponuntur imitanda. (Nat 3 1; SBOP IV: 257–8)

Vasa sunt aurea et argentea, quibus pro tanta sollemnitate in mensa Domini etiam egenis quibusque hodie ministratur. Non est nobis tollere ista, non nobis aureus discus datur aut scyphus, sed qui in eis cibus est et potus. (Nat 3 1; SBOP IV: 257)

[p.259]

Sed quam multa hodie gemmis et auro fulgent altaria! Quanti ubique palliis parietes adornantur! Putas ad haec divertent angeli, et pannosos homines declinabunt? Si ita est, cur pastoribus ovium magis apparere, quam terrae regibus, quam sacerdotibus templi? Cur et ipse Salvator, cuius est aurum pariter et argentum, sacram in suo corpore dedicat paupertatem? (Nat 4 1; SBOP IV: 263)

[p.259–60]

Ludebam ego foris in platea, et in secreto regalis cubiculi super me ferebatur iudicium mortis. Audivit hoc Unigenitus eius; exiit, posito diademate, sacco vestitus... (Nat 3 4; SBOP IV: 260)

[p.261]

Ama nesciri, laudet te os alienum, sileat tuum. (Nat 3 2; SBOP IV: 259)

Et vere, fratres, Verbum factum est caro, et habitavit in nobis. Dum esset in principio apud Deum, lucem habitabat inaccessibilem, et non erat qui caperet illud. **QUIS ENIM INVESTIGAVIT SENSUM DOMINI, AUT QUIS CONSILIARIUS EIUS FUIT?** Carnalis homo non percipiet ea quae Spiritus Dei sunt; sed iam capiat et carnalis quia factum est caro. Si nihil praeter carnem novit audire, ecce Verbum caro factum est: audiat illud vel in carne. O homo, in carne tibi exhibetur Sapientia: illa quondam occulta, ecce iam ipsis sese ingerit sensibus carnis tuae. Carnaliter, ut ita dixerim, praedicatur tibi; 'Fuge voluptatem, **QUIA MORS POSITA EST SECUS INTROITUM DELECTATIONIS**; age paenitentiam, quia per hanc appropinquat regnum.' Hoc tibi praedicat stabulum illud, hoc praesepe clamat, hoc membra illa infantilia manifeste loquuntur, hoc lacrimae et vagitus evangelizant. (Nat 3 3; SBOP IV: 259–60)

[p.263]

O duritia cordis mei! Utinam, Domine, sicut Verbum caro factum est, ita et cor meum carneum fiat! Siquidem et haec pollicitus es per Prophetam: **AUFERAM, inquit, A VOBIS COR LAPIDEUM, ET DABO VOBIS COR CARNEUM.** (Nat 3 3; SBOP IV: 260)

[p.264–5]

Fatres, lacrimae Christi mihi et pudorem pariunt, et dolorem. Ludebam ego foris in platea, et in secreto regalis cubiculi super me ferebatur iudicium mortis. Audivit hoc Unigenitus eius; exiit, posito diademate, sacco vestitus, adpersus cinere caput, nudus pedes, flens et eiulans, quod morte damnatus esset servulus eius. Intueor illum subito procedentem, stupeo novitatem, causam percontor et audio. Quid facturus sum? Adhucne ludam, et deludam lacrimas eius? Plane, si insanus sum et mentis inops, non sequar eum, nec simul cum lugente lugebo. Ecce unde et pudor. Dolor et timor unde? Utique quia ex consideratione remedii, periculi mei aestimo quantitatem. Nesciebam, sanus mihi videbar; et ecce mittitur Virginis Filius, Filius Dei altissimi, et iubetur, ut vulneribus meis pretioso sanguinis illius balsamo medeatur. Agnosce, homo, quam gravia sunt vulnera pro quibus necesse est Christum Dominum vulnerari. Si non essent haec ad mortem, et mortem sempiternam, numquam pro eorum remedio Dei Filius moreretur. Pudet itaque, dilectissimi, propriam negligenter dissimulare passionem, cui tantam a maiestate tanta exhiberi video compassionem. Compatitur Filius Dei, et plorat; homo patitur, et ridebit? Sic et medicinae aestimatio, et doloris mihi, et timoris exaggeratio est. (Nat 3 4; SBOP IV: 260–1)

[p.270]

Si me insecutus Laban arguerit, quod recesserim clam ab eo, audiet clam me accessisse ad eum, et ob hoc clam recessisse. Subiecit me illi causa secretior peccati, subduxit me illi ratio occultioris iustitiae. Aut si gratis venumdatus sum, gratis non redimar? Si Assur sine causa calumniatus est mihi, sine causa causam exigit evasionis. Quod si dixerit: 'Pater tuus addixit te', respondebo: 'Sed frater meus redemit me'. Cur non aliunde iustitia, cum aliunde reatus? Alius qui peccatorem constituit, alius qui iustificat a peccato: alter in semine, alter in sanguine. An peccatum in semine peccatoris, et non iustitia in Christi sanguine? Sed iustitia, inquiet, sit cuius est: quid ad te? Esto. Sed sit etiam culpa cuius est: quid a me? (Ep 190 16; SBOP VIII: 30)

Chapter Eight

[p.278–9]

Et illi quidem praemissi sunt, tamquam baculus ad mortuum Prophetam praeveniens, et sua interpretari nomina nequiverunt: vacua quippe erant. Superpositus mortuo baculus est, et non erat vox neque sensus, quoniam baculus erat. Descendit qui baculum misit; et mox salvum fecit populum suum a peccatis eorum, probans se esse quod dicebatur: **QUIS EST HIC, QUI ETIAM PECCATA DIMITTIT?** Nimirum qui dicit: **SALUS POPULI EGO SUM.** Iam vox, iam sensus est, et patet eum non inane portare nomen instar priorum. Sentitur infusa salus, et beneficium non tacetur. Intus sensus, foris vox. Compungor, et confiteor, et confessio vitam indicat: **A MORTUO ENIM, TAMQUAM QUI NON EST, PERIT CONFESSIO.** Ecce vita, ecce sensus. Suscitatus perfecte sum, integra est resurrectio. An aliud mors corporis est, nisi cum sensu privatur et vita? Peccatum, quod mors est animae, nec compunctionis mihi sensum, nec confessionis reliquerat vocem, et eram mortuus. Venit is qui peccata dimittit, et utrumque restituit, et dicit animae meae: **SALUS TUA EGO SUM.** Quid mirum, si cedit mors, ubi vita descendit? Iam corde creditur ad iustitiam, ore autem confessio fit ad salutem. Iam oscitat puer, et oscitat septies, et dicit: **SEPTIES IN DIE LAUDEM DIXI TIBI, DOMINE.** (SC 15 V 8; SBOP I: 88)

[p.279]

In sermone superiori dicere coeperam; sed intervenit subito aliud quod praedicendum videbatur, quamquam intermiserim ultra quam credidi. Quod non aliud esse reor, nisi quod fortis mulier, Sapientia, misit manum ad colum, et digiti eius apprehenderunt fusum. Novit enim modicam lanam vel linum in longum producere filum, atque in telae extendere latitudinem, et sic omnes domesticos suos vestire duplicibus. (SC 15 III 5; SBOP I: 85)

[p.280]

Nescio enim an ita simplex quispiam in nobis sit, qui otiosas esse has vices, et numerum hunc putet fortuitum. Ego nec illud vacare reor, quod Propheta incumbens super mortuum, ad mensuram puerilis corporis sese contraxit, os suum ori illius coniunxit, oculisque oculos, et manibus manus. Spiritus Sanctus sic omnia fieri, et sic scribi fecit, ad eruditionem procul dubio illorum spirituum, quos corrupti corporis circumvenit infida societas... (SC 16 I 1; SBOP I: 89)

[p.280–1]

Propterea nemo miretur aut moleste accipiat, si in his scrutandis, tamquam quibusdam Spiritus Sancti apothecis, curiosus exsisto, cum sciam quia sic vivitur, et in talibus vita spiritus mei. Dico tamen his qui, praevolantes ingenio, in omni sermone ante pene flagitant finem, quam principium teneant, debitorem me etiam tardioribus esse, et maxime; sed nec studium tam esse mihi ut exponam verba, quam ut imbuam corda. Et haurire et propinare me oportet, quod non fit celeriter percurrando, sed tractando diligenter et exhortando frequenter. Quamquam et praeter spem quoque meam, diu nos discussio detinuit sacramentorum. Putavi, fateor, unum ad hoc sermonem sufficeret silvamque istam umbrosam latebrosamque allegoriarum pertransire nos cito, et ad planitiem moralium sensuum itinere diei quasi unius pervenire; sed secus contigit. Biduum quippe iam in eo expendimus, et adhuc restat via. Ictus oculi eminens summitates ramorum et montium cacumina pervolabat; sed vallium subter iacens vastitas et densitas dumetorum frustrabatur obtutus. Numquid, verbi gratia, Elisei miraculum praevidere valebam, quia nobis videlicet de Gentium vocatione et repulsione Iudaeorum disserentibus, ita de subito in medium prosiliret? Et nunc, quandoquidem incidimus, non pigeat nos paululum immorari, consequenter ad id quod praetermittimus postea reversuros: siquidem animarum cibus nihilominus est iste. (SC 16 I 1; SBOP I: 89–90)

[p.283–4]

Non parvum fiduciae robur praestat mihi, quod magnus ille vir Propheta, potens in opere et sermone, de excelso monte caelorum descendens, visitare dignatus est me, cum sim cinis et pulvis, misereri mortuo, inclinare se iacenti, contrahi et coaequari parvo, caeco partiri lumen oculorum suorum, et os mutum oris proprii osculo solvere, debilesque manus suarum roborare contactu. Suaviter rumino ista: et replentur viscera mea, et interiora mea saginantur, et omnia ossa mea germinant laudem. Hoc semel contulit universitati; hoc quotidie singula in nobis actitari sentimus, et cordi scilicet tribui intelligentiae lumen, et ori aedificationis verbum, et manibus opus iustitiae. Dat sentire fideliter, dat proferre utiliter, dat efficaciter adimplere. Et est funiculus triplex, qui difficile rumpitur, ad extrahendas animas de carcere diaboli et trahendas post se ad regna caelestia, si recte sentias, si digne proloquaris, si vivendo confirmes. Oculis suis tegit meos, interioris hominis frontem claris luminaribus ornans, fide et intellectu. Ori meo iunxit suum, et mortuo signum pacis impressit, quoniam cum adhuc peccatores essemus, reconciliavit nos Deo, iustitiae mortuos. Os ori applicavit, iterato inspirans in faciem meam spiraculum vitae, sed sanctioris quam primo: nam primo

quidem in animam viventem creavit me, secundo in spiritum vivificantem reformavit me. Manus suas meis superposuit, exemplum praebens bonorum operum, formam oboedientiae. Aut certe manus suas misit ad fortia, ut doceret meas ad proelium et digitos meos ad bellum. (SC 16 II 2; SBOP I: 90–1)

[p.286–7]

Ardorem desiderii patrum suspirantium Christi in carne praesentiam frequentissime cogitans, compungor et confundor in memetipso. Et nunc vix contineo lacrimas, ita pudet teporis torporisque miserabilium temporum horum. Cui namque nostrum tantum ingerat gaudium gratiae huius exhibitio, quantum veteribus sanctis accenderat desiderium promissio? Ecce enim quam multi in hac eius, quae proxime celebranda est, nativitate gaudebunt! Sed utinam de nativitate! Illorum ergo desiderium flagrans et piaae expectationis affectum spirat mihi vox ista: OSCULETUR ME OSCULO ORIS SUI. Senserat nimirum in spiritu quisquis tunc spiritualis esse poterat, quanta foret gratia diffusa in labiis illis. Propterea loquens in desiderio animae aiebat: OSCULETUR ME OSCULO ORIS SUI, nimirum omnimodis cupiens tantae suavitatis participio non fraudari.

Dicebat enim perfectus quisque: 'Quo mihi, oro, haec seminiverbia Prophetarum? Ipse potius speciosus forma prae filiis hominum, ipse me osculetur osculo oris sui. Non audio iam Moysen: impeditioris siquidem linguae factus est mihi. Isaiae labia immunda sunt, Ieremias nescit loqui, quia puer est, et prophetae omnes elingues sunt. Ipse, ipse, quem loquuntur, ipse loquatur; ipse me osculetur osculo oris sui. Non in eis iam aut per eos loquatur mihi, quoniam tenebrosa aqua in nubibus aeris; sed ipse me osculetur osculo oris sui, cuius gratiosa praesentia et admirandae fluentia doctrinae fiant in me fons aquae salientis in vitam aeternam. Quem unxit Pater oleo laetitiae prae consortibus suis, numquid non ex ipso mihi uberius infunditur gratia, si tamen dignetur me osculo oris sui? Cuius utique sermo vivus et efficax osculum mihi est, non quidem coniunctio labiorum, quae interdum pacem mentitur animorum, sed plane infusio gaudiorum, revelatio secretorum, mira quaedam et quodammodo indiscreta commixtio superni luminis et illuminatae mentis. Adhaerens quippe Deo unus spiritus est. Merito proinde visiones et somnia non recipio, figuras et enigmata nolo, ipsas quoque angelicas fastidio species. Quippe et ipsos longe superat Iesus meus specie sua et pulchritudine sua. Non ergo alium, sive angelum, sive hominem, sed ipsum peto osculari me osculo oris sui.' (SC 2 I 1–2; SBOP I: 8–9)

[p.291]

Ceterum illis praenuntiantibus pacem, moram autem faciente auctore pacis, nutabat populi fides, dum non erat qui redimeret neque qui salvum faceret. Itaque causabantur homines moras, quod ille toties nuntiatus necdum veniret Princeps pacis, sicut locutus fuerat per os sanctorum qui a saeculo sunt prophetarum eius; et suspectas habentes promissiones, signum promissae reconciliationis, quod est osculum, flagitabant, ac si nuntiis pacis unus quilibet de populo responderet: Quousque tollitis animas nostras? Iam olim praedicitis pacem, et non venit; promittitis bona, et adhuc turbatio. Ecce hoc ipsum multifarie multisque modis et angeli patribus, et patres nostri annuntiaverunt nobis, dicentes: PAX, ET NON EST PAX. Si mihi vult esse persuasum Deus, quod de suae beneplacito voluntatis tam crebra iam legatione spondet nec exhibet, OSCULETUR ME OSCULO ORIS SUI, sicque in signo pacis faciat de pace securum. Nam verbis iam quomodo credam? Opus magis est opere verba firmari. Probet veridicos nuntios suos Deus, si tamen nuntii eius sunt, et sequatur eos ipse, ut saepius promiserunt, quia sine ipso possunt facere nihil. Misit puerum, tulit

baculum, et necdum vox neque vita. Non surgo, non suscitior, non excutior de pulvere, non respiro in spem, si non propheta ipse descendat et OSCULETUR ME OSCULO ORIS SUI. (SC 2 III 5; SBOP I: 10–11)

[p.293]

Est et aliud, in quo resurrectionis huius innotescat gloria singularis. Quis enim in omnibus ceteris suscitavit aliquando semetipsum? Ineffabile istud est, ut a morte se excitet ipse qui dormit; singulare est, non est qui faciat, non est usque ad unum. Elisaeus Propheta mortuum suscitavit, sed alterum, non seipsum. Ecce enim quot annis iacet in monumento, quod a se non potest, sperans ab alio suscitare, ab eo utique, qui triumphavit mortis imperium in seipso. Inde est quod ceteros quidem dicimus suscitatos, Christum resurrexisse, qui solus virtute propria victor prodiit de sepulcro: siquidem et in hoc VICIT LEO DE TRIBU IUDA. (Res 1 7; SBOP V: 82)

[p.296]

VICIT LEO DE TRIBU IUDA. Vicit plane malitiam sapientia, attingens a fine usque ad finem fortiter et suaviter universa disponens, sed pro me fortiter, suaviter mihi. (Res 1 1; SBOP V: 73)

VICIT LEO DE TRIBU IUDA, RADIX DAVID, APERIRE LIBRUM ET SOLVERE SEPTEM SIGNACULA EIUS. Apocalypsis verba sunt haec. Discant qui non legerunt, recolant qui noverunt. VIDI, inquit Ioannes, IN DEXTERA SEDENTIS SUPER THRONUM, LIBRUM SIGNATUM SIGILLIS SEPTEM, et non erat qui legeret vel aperiret. ET EGO, ait, FLEBAM MULTUM, QUOD NEMO APERIRE LIBRUM DIGNUS INVENIRETUR. ET UNUS DE SENIORIBUS DIXIT MIHI: NE FLEVERIS; ECCE VICIT LEO DE TRIBU IUDA, et cetera. ET VIDI, ET ECCE IN MEDIO THRONI AGNUM STANTEM, TAMQUAM OCCISUM... (Res 1 10; SBOP V: 86)

Sed ne fleveris ultra, Iohannes sancte; etiam tu noli flere Maria. Procul sit luctus, nebula dissipetur. (Res 1 12; SBOP V: 89)

[p.297]

Clausit et sepultura librum hunc, nec ullum omnino signaculum sic adstrinxit, sic occultavit magnum pietatis sacramentum. Sepulto nimirum Domino, sola restare desperatio videbatur, adeo ut discipuli ipsi dicerent quia NOS SPERABAMUS. Quis non illo flere in tempore clausum arctius librum, et non esse qui aperiret? (Res 1 11; SBOP V: 88)

[p.298]

VICIT enim LEO DE TRIBU IUDA, Suscitatus est paterna voce leonis catulus; clauso prodiit tumulo, qui de patibulo non descendit. An vero id maius sit, inimici nostri sint indices, qui tam curiose munierant monumentum, signantes lapidem cum custodibus. Hunc enim lapidem magnum valde, de quo mulieres illae devotae invicem quaerebantur, facta iam resurrectione Dominica, revolvit Angelus et resedit, sicut scriptum est, super eum. Constat proinde clauso exiisse tumulo redivivum corpus, quod clauso Virginis utero natum processit in vitam, et ad discipulos clausis introivit ianuis in conclavim. Sed est locus unde clausis noluit procedere ianuis, carcer utique gehennalis. Confregit siquidem ferreos vectes, repagula universa contrivit, ut libere suos educeret, quos redemerat de manu inimici, et plenius egrederentur portis agmina

dealbatorum, qui laverant stolas suas et candidas eas fecerant in sanguine Agni: candidas prorsus in sanguine, quia exivit cum eo et in eo etiam aqua dealbans, et testimonium perhibet ipse qui vidit. (Res 1 5; SBOP V: 80–1)

[p.298–9]

Heri audistis quod venientibus ad monumentum mulieribus sanctis, terraemotus factus est, et angelus descendit de caelo et revolvit lapidem de quo conquerebantur ad invicem, et super eum sedit, et dixit quia non esset inibi quem quaerebant, sed iam surrexisset. (Res 1 6; SBOP V: 81)

[p.300]

VIVIFICABIT NOS POST DUOS DIES, IN DIE TERTIA SUSCITABIT NOS
(Os 6,3) (Res 1 8; SBOP V: 83)

Sic et nos, si vere membra eius sumus, si caput nostrum sequi volumus, prima die, id est dum sumus in carne ista mortali, perseveremus in cruce paenitentiae nostrae...sic feliciter consummata hac die, iam secunda, quae est post mortem, erimus in sepulcro, in pace in idipsum dormientes et ab omni labore quiescentes...Tertia die resurgemus, ut semper in gloria et vita aeterna simus. (Res 1 8; SBOP V: 83–4)

Persistamus in cruce, moriamur in cruce... quiescamus suaviter, dormiamus feliciter in sepulcris, EXSPECTANTES BEATAM SPEM ET ADVENTUM GLORIAE MAGNI DEI, qui resuscitabit corpora nostra tertia demum die, configurata corpori claritatis suae. (Res 1 8; SBOP V: 84)

[p.301]

Quicumque enim post lamenta paenitentiae non ad carnales redit consolationes, sed in fiduciam divinae miserationis excedit et ingreditur novam quamdam devotionem et gaudium in Spiritu Sancto, nec tam compungitur praeteritorum recordatione peccatorum quam delectatur memoria et inflammatur aeternorum desiderio praemiorum, is plane est qui cum Christo resurgit, qui Pascha celebrat, qui festinat in Galilaeam. Vos ergo, carissimi, SI CONSURREXISTIS CUM CHRISTO, QUAE SURSUM SUNT QUAERITE, UBI CHRISTUS EST IN DEXTERA DEI SEDENS, QUAE SURSUM SUNT SAPITE, NON QUAE SUPER TERRAM, ut, quemadmodum Christus resurrexit a mortuis per gloriam Patris, ita et vos in novitate vitae ambuletis, ut a saeculari laetitia et consolatione mundi per compunctionem et tristitiam, quae secundum Deum est, ad devotionem sanctam et spiritualem vos transire gaudeatis exultationem, ipso praestante qui transivit ex hoc mundo ad Patrem, et nos quoque trahere post se et in Galilaeam vocare dignatur, ut semetipsum nobis ostendat, qui est super omnia Deus in saecula benedictus. (Res 1 18; SBOP V: 94)

[p.304–5]

Accepimus ab Apostolo habitare Christum per fidem in cordibus nostris. Unde videtur non incongrue intelligi posse, tamdiu Christum in nobis vivere, quamdiu vivit fides. At postquam fides nostra mortua est, quodammodo Christus mortuus est in nobis. Porro fidei vitam opera attestantur, sicut scriptum est: OPERA QUAE DEDIT MIHI PATER, IPSA TESTIMONIUM PERHIBENT DE ME. Nec discrepare videtur ab hac sententia, qui fidem sine operibus mortuam asserit in semetipsa. Sicut enim corporis huius vitam ex motu suo dignoscimus, ita et fidei vitam ex operibus bonis. Itaque vita quidem corporis anima, per quam movetur et sentit; vita vero fidei caritas est, quia per illam operatur, sicut in Apostolo legis: FIDES QUAE PER DILECTIONEM

OPERATUR. Unde et frigescente caritate fides moritur, sicut corpus anima recedente. Tu ergo si videris hominem in bonis operibus strenuum et fervore conversationis hilarem, vivere in eo fidem ne dubites, indubitata tenens vitae illius argumenta. (Res 2 1; SBOP V: 95)

[p.306]

Mortuum autem dixerim illum, qui sua peccata defendens, in octavum iam corruit gradum. A mortuo enim, tamquam qui non est, perit confessio. Post decimum vero, qui tertius est ab octavo, iam effertur in libertatem peccandi, quando expellitur a consortio monasterii. At postquam quartum transierit, iam recte quatruiduanus dicitur, dum in quintum decidens per consuetudinem sepelitur. (Hum XXII 55; SBOP III: 57–8)

Sed numquid dicis, o Apostole, ut quis desperet? Immo gemat qui illum amat. Non praesumat orare, nec desistat plorare. Quid est quod dico? An forte ullum remanet spei refugium, ubi oratio non invenit locum? Audi credentem, sperantem, nec tamen orantem : DOMINE, inquit, SI FUISSES HIC, FRATER MEUS NON FUISSET MORTUUS... (Hum XXII 52; SBOP III: 55)

Chapter Nine

[p.317]

Quid? Modo it, modo revocas? Quid subitum in tam brevi emersit? Oblitane aliquid? Etiam oblita totum quod non est ille, se quoque ipsam. (SC 73 I 1; SBOP II: 233)

[p.317–8]

Nunc vero sustinete modicum quid insipientiae meae. Volo dicere, nam et hoc pactus sum, quomodo mecum agitur in eiusmodi. Non expedit quidem. Sed prodar sane ut prosim, et, si profeceritis vos, meam insipientiam consolabor; si non, meam insipientiam confitebor. Fateor et mihi adventasse Verbum,—in insipientia dico,—et pluries. Cumque saepius intraverit ad me, non sensi aliquoties cum intravit. Adesse sensi, fuisse recordor; interdum et praesentire potui introitum eius, sentire numquam, sed ne exitum quidem. Nam unde in animam meam venerit, quoque abierit denuo eam dimittens, sed et qua introierit vel exierit, etiam nunc ignorare me fateor, secundum illud: NESCIIS UNDE VENIAT AUT QUO VADAT. Nec mirum tamen, quia ipse est cui dictum est: ET VESTIGIA TUA NON COGNOSCENTUR. Sane per oculos non intravit, quia non est coloratum; sed neque per aures, quia non sonuit; neque per nares, quia non aeri miscetur, sed menti, nec infecit aerem, sed fecit; neque vero per fauces, quia non est mansum vel haustum; nec tactu comperi illud, quia palpabile non est. Qua igitur introivit? An forte nec introivit quidem, quia non de foris venit? Neque enim est unum aliquid ex his quae foris sunt. Porro nec de intra me venit, quoniam bonum est, et scio quoniam non est in me bonum. Ascendi etiam superius meum, et ecce supra hoc Verbum eminens. Ad inferius quoque meum curiosus explorator descendi, et nihilominus infra inventum est. Si foras aspexi, extra omne exterius meum comperi illud esse; si intus, et ipsum interius erat. Et cognovi verum quidem esse quod legeram: quia IN IPSO VIVIMUS, MOVEMUR ET SUMUS; sed ille beatus est, in quo est ipsum, qui illi vivit, qui eo movetur. (SC 74 II 5; SBOP II: 242–3)

[p.320–1]

Quaeris igitur, cum ita sint omnino investigabiles viae eius, unde adesse norim? Vivum et efficax est, moxque ut intus venit, expergefecit dormitantem animam meam; movit et emollivit, et vulneravit cor meum, quoniam durum lapideumque erat, et male sanum. Coepit quoque evellere et destruere, aedificare et plantare, rigare arida, tenebrosa illuminare, clausa reserare, frigida inflammare, necnon et mittere prava in directa, et aspera in vias planas, ita ut benediceret anima mea Domino, et omnia quae intra me sunt nomini sancto eius. Ita igitur intrans ad me aliquoties Verbum sponsus, nullis umquam introitum suum indicis innotescere fecit: non voce, non specie, non incessu. Nullis denique suis motibus compertum est mihi, nullis meis sensibus illapsum penetralibus meis: tantum ex motu cordis, sicut praefatus sum, intellexi praesentiam eius; et ex fuga vitiorum, carnaliumque compressione affectuum, adverti potentiam virtutis eius; et ex discussione sive redargutione occultorum meorum, admiratus sum profunditatem sapientiae eius; et ex quantulumcumque emendatione morum meorum, expertus sum bonitatem mansuetudinis eius; et ex reformatione ac renovatione spiritus mentis meae, id est interioris hominis mei, percepi utcumque speciem decoris eius; et ex contuitu horum omnium simul, expavi multitudinem magnitudinis eius. (SC 74 II 6; SBOP II: 243)

[p.321]

Verum quia haec omnia, ubi abscesserit Verbum, perinde ac si ollae bullienti subfraxeris ignem, quodam illico languore torpentia et frigida iacere incipiunt, atque hoc mihi signum abscessionis eius, tristis sit necesse est anima mea, donec iterum revertatur, et solito recalescat cor meum intra me, idque sit reversionis indicium. Tale sane experimentum de Verbo habens, quid mirum, si et ego usurpo mihi vocem sponsae in revocando illud, cum se absentaverit, qui etsi non pari, simili tamen vel ex parte desiderio feror? Familiare mihi erit, quoad vixero, pro Verbi revocatione revocationis verbum, quod utique REVERTERE est. Et quoties elabatur, toties repetetur a me, nec cessabo clamitare, quasi post tergum abeuntis, ardenti desiderio cordis ut redeat, et reddat mihi laetitiam salutaris sui, reddat mihi seipsum. (SC 74 II 7; SBOP II: 243–4)

[p.323]

Et nunc da mihi animam, quam frequenter Verbum sponsus invisere soleat, cui familiaritas asum, cui gustus famem, cui contemptus omnium otium dederit: et ego huic incunctanter assigno vocem pariter et nomen sponsae, nec ab ea penitus locum, qui in manibus est, censuerim alienum. Talis nempe inducitur loquens. Quem enim revocat, eius absque dubio probat se meruisse praesentiam, etsi non copiam. Alioquin non revocasset illum, sed vocasset. Porro revocationis verbum REVERTERE est. (SC 74 I 3; SBOP II: 241)

[p.323–4]

Et forte ideo subtraxit se, quo avidius revocaretur, teneretur fortius. Nam et aliquando simulabat se longius ire, non quia hoc volebat, sed volebat audire: MANE NOBISCUM, QUONIAM ADVESPERASCIT. Et rursum alia vice super mare ambulans, cum Apostoli navigarent et laborarent in remigando, quasi volens praeterire eos, ne tunc quidem istud volebat, sed magis probare idem et elicere precem. Denique, sicut ait Evangelista, turbati sunt et clamaverunt, putantes phantasma esse. Ergo istiusmodi piam simulationem, immo salutarem dispensationem, quam tunc corporaliter Verbum corpus interdum exhibuit, non cessat identidem Verbum spiritus, modo suo spirituali, cum devota sibi anima sedulo actitare. Praeteriens teneri vult, abiens revocari. Neque enim hoc irrevocabile Verbum: it et redit pro beneplacito suo, quasi visitans diluculo,

et subito probans. Et ire quidem illi quodammodo dispensatorium, redire vero semper voluntarium est: utrumque autem plenum iudicii. At penes ipsum horum ratio. (SC 74 I 3; SBOP II: 241)

[p.325]

Fateor et mihi adventasse Verbum,—in insipientia dico—, et pluries. Cumque saepius intraverit ad me, non sensi aliquoties cum intravit. (SC 74 II 5; SBOP II: 242)

[p.326]

Nunc vero constat in anima fieri huiusmodi vicissitudines euntis et redeuntis Verbi, sicut ait: VADO ET VENIO AD VOS; item: MODICUM, ET NON VIDEBITIS ME; ET ITERUM MODICUM, ET VIDEBITIS ME. O modicum et modicum! O modicum longum Pie Domine, modicum dicis quod non videmus te? Salvum sit verbum Domini mei: longum est et multum valde nimis. Verumtamen utrumque verum: et modicum meritis, et longum votis. Habes utrumque in Propheta: SI MORAM FECERIT, inquit, EXSPECTA EUM, QUIA VENIET ET NON TARDABIT. (SC 74 I 4; SBOP II: 241–2)

[p.326]

REVERTERE, inquit. Liquet non adesse quem revocat; affuisse tamen, idque non longe ante: quippe qui, dum adhuc abiret, revocari videtur. Intempestiva revocatio... (SC 74 I 1; SBOP II: 239)

[p.327]

REVERTERE, ait. Bene. Abibat, revocatur. Quis mihi huius reseret mutabilitatis sacramentum? Quis mihi digne explicet ire et redire Verbi? Numquid mutabilitate utitur Sponsus? Unde, quo venire seu denuo ire queat, qui totum implet? Quem denique motum habere localem possit, qui spiritus est? Aut quem postremo vel cuiuscumque generis motum das illi, qui Deus est? Est quippe incommutabilis. (SC 74 I 1; SBOP II: 240)

[p.330–1]

Omnia quae de Salvatore legimus, medicamina sunt animarumstrarum. Videamus ergo ne quando forte dicatur de nobis: CURAVIMUS BABYLONEM ET NON EST SANATA. Cogitet unusquisque, quantum operentur in eo tam salutaria medicamenta. Sunt enim quibus nondum natus est Christus, sunt quibus nondum est passus, sunt quibus non surrexit usque adhuc. Aliis quoque nondum ascendit, aliis nondum misit Spiritum Sanctum. Quomodo enim operatur eius humilitas QUI, CUM IN FORMA DEI ESSET, NON RAPINAM ARBRITATUS ESSE SE AEQUALEM DEO, SEMETIPSUM EXINAVIT, FORMAM SERVI ACCIPIENS, quomodo, inquam, Dei humilitas in superbo homine operatur? Quae illius humilitatis vestigia in his, qui adhuc toto desiderio terrenis divitiis et honoribus inhiant? An non modo exhilaratur conscientia vestra, fratres mei, quod dicere potestis: PARVULUS NATUS EST NOBIS? Sunt quibus nondum Christus passus est, qui labores fugiunt, mortem metuunt usque adhuc, quasi vero ille et labores sustinendo, et mortem moriendo non vicerit. Sunt quibus nondum surrexit, qui in laborum anxietate et afflictione paenitentiae morte afficiuntur tota die, nondum spirituali consolatione recepta. Sed NISI BREVIATI FUISSENT DIES ILLI, quis posset sustinere? Aliis resurrexit Christus, sed nondum ascendit; immo cum eis adhuc pia dulcedine commoratur in terris, his scilicet qui in devotione sunt tota die, flent in orationibus, suspirant in meditationibus suis, et omnia festiva et iucunda sunt eis, et per omnes dies illos continuum Alleluia cantatur. Sed oportet lac eis subtrahi, ut discant vesci solido cibo,

et expedit eis ut Christus vadat, et haec temporalis devotio subtrahatur. Sed quando hoc capere poterunt? Desertos sese a Domino, privatos gratia conqueruntur. Sed expectent paululum, sedeant in civitate, donec induantur solidiori quadam virtute ex alto et maiora percipiant charismata Spiritus Sancti, sicut Apostoli, in gradum promoti sunt altiore et, supereminentiorem viam caritatis ingressi, non iam solliciti quomodo flerent paululum, sed quomodo magna quadam victoria de communi adversario triumpharent et conculcarent Satanam sub pedibus suis. (Res 4 1–2; SBOP V: 110–11)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

- Abelard. *Historia calamitatum*. Monfrin, J. (ed.) 1959. Paris.
- . . Epistola contra Bernhardum abbatem. Leclercq, J. (ed.) 1953. In: 'Etudes sur Bernard et le texte de ses écrits'. *Analecta sacri ordinis cisterciensis* 9: 104–5. Also in: Klibansky, R. 1961. *Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 5: 1–27.
- . . *Sic et non*. Boyer B.B. and R. McKeon (eds.) 1976. Chicago.
- . . Theologia summi boni. Buytaert, E.M. and C.J. Mews (eds.) 1987. *Opera theologica*: 85–201. Turnhout. Corpus christianorum. Continuatio medievalis 12.
- Ambrose. De excessu fratris sui Satyri libri duo. Faller, O. (ed.) 1955. *Sancti Ambrosii Opera*. Wien. Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum 73: 207–325.
- Anselm of Canterbury. *S. Anselmi Opera omnia*. Schmitt, F.S. (ed.) 1968. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt.
- Augustine. Confessiones. Knoll, P. (ed.) 1896. *Sancti Aureli Augustini Opera*. Wien. Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum 33.
- Benedict of Nursia. *Sancti Benedicti Regula Monachorum*. Vogüé, A. de and J. Neufville (eds. and transls.) 1972. Paris. Sources chrétiennes 181.
- Berengar of Poitiers. Apologeticus. In: PL 178: 1857–70. New edition: Thomson, R.M. (ed.) 1980. The Satirical Works of Berengar of Poitiers: An Edition with Introduction. *Medieval Studies* 42: 89–139.
- Bernard of Clairvaux. *Sancti Bernardi Opera*. Leclercq, J., C.H. Talbot and H.M. Rochais (eds.) 1957–77. 8 vols. Rome.
- . . *Selected Works*. Evans, G.R. (transl.) 1987. New York. The Classics of Western Spirituality.
- . . *On the Song of Songs* III. Walsh, K. and I.M. Edmonds (transls.) 1979. Kalamazoo. Cistercian Fathers Series 31.
- . . Apologia. Rudolph, C. (transl.) 1990. In: *The "Things of Greater Importance"*. Bernard of Clairvaux's *Apologia* and the Medieval Attitude toward Art. Philadelphia.
- Cicero. *De oratore*. Sutton, E.W. and H. Rackham (transls.) 1942. 2 volumes. Loeb Classical Library.
- Conrad of Eberbach. *Exordium magnum cisterciense sive narratio de initio ordinis, auctore Conrado de Eberabach*. Griesser, B. (ed.) 1961. Rome. Series Scriptorum S. Ordinis Cisterciensis 2.
- Corpus Antiphonalium Officii* vol. 3. Invitatoria et Antiphonae. Hesbert, R.J. (ed.) 1968. Rome. Rerum Ecclesiasticarum Documenta. Series Maior. Fontes 9.
- Erasmus. Enarratio Psalmi XXXVIII. Stupperich, R. (ed.) 1986. In: *Erasmi Opera omnia* V, 3. Amsterdam.
- . . Ecclesiastes. Chomarat, J. (ed.) 1991. In: *Erasmi Opera omnia*. V, 4. Amsterdam.
- Gregory the Great. *Moralia in Iob*. Gillet, R. (ed.) and A. de Gaudemaris (transl.) 1974–5. Paris. Sources chrétiennes 32.
- Gregory of Nyssa. Vita S. Macrinae. In: Jaeger, W. (ed.) 1963. *Opera ascetica* VIII, 1: 370–414. Leiden.

- Homer. *The Iliad*. Rieu, E.V. (transl.) 1973. London.
- Horace. *Ars poetica*. Rushton Fairclough, H. (transl.) 1926, Cambridge Mass. Loeb Classical Library.
- Iohannes Scottus Eriugena. *Periphyseon (De Divisione Naturae) liber primus*. Sheldon-Williams, I.-P. and L. Bieler (eds.) 1968. Dublin. Scriptores Latini Hiberniae vol. 7. Reprint 1978.
- Jacobus A Voragine. *Legenda aurea vulgo historia lombardica dicta*. Graesse. Th. (ed.) 1965 (reprint of the first edition, 1890). Osnabrück.
- Luther. De votis monasticis. In: 1889. *Weimar Ausgabe* 8: 564–670.
- Mabillon, J. *Praefatio generalis*. Preface to the Works of Bernard of Clairvaux. In: PL 182: 14–56.
- Migne, J.P. (ed.) 1844–55. *Patrologiae cursus completus. series Latina*. Paris.
- Origen. *Homiliae in Canticum Canticorum*. Rousseau, O. (ed. and transl.) 1953. Paris. Sources Chrétiennes 37.
- Peter Damian. *Lettre sur l'omnipotence de Dieu*. Cantin, A. (ed. and transl.) 1963. Paris. Sources chrétiennes 91.
- Raby, F.J.E. 1959. *The Oxford Book of Medieval Verse*. Oxford.
- Racine. Abrégé de l'histoire de Port-Royal. In: Picard, R. (ed.) 1966. *Oeuvres complètes*. Tome 2: 37–147. Paris. Bibliothèque de la Pléiade.
- Robert de Basevorn. *Artes praedicandi*. In: Charland, Th.M. 1936. *Artes praedicandi*. Paris and Ottawa. Translated by Krul, L. O.S.B. In: Murphy, J.J. 1971. *Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts*: 114–215. Berkeley and Los Angeles.
- Rupertus Tuitiensis. *Commentaria in Canticum Canticorum*. Haacke, H. (ed.) 1974. Turnhout. Corpus christianorum. Continuatio medievalis 26.
- Suger of Saint Denis. De administratione: De rebus in administratione sua gestis. In: Panofsky, E. (ed. and transl.) 1979. *Abbot Suger on the Abbey Church of St.-Denis and its Art Treasures*: 4–80. Second edition. Princeton.

Secondary Sources

- Astell, A. 1990. *The Song of Songs in the Middle Ages*. Ithaca/London.
- Auberger, J.B. 1986. *L'unanimité cistercienne primitive, mythe ou réalité?*. Cîteaux-Achel.
- Auerbach, E. 1938. 'Figura'. *Archivum Romanicum* 22: 436–89. Translated into English in: Auerbach 1959: 11–76.
- . 1959. Reprinted in 1973. *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*. Gloucester, Mass.
- Bakhtin, M. 1990. 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics'. In: Emerson, C. and M. Holquist. (transl.). *The Dialogic Imagination*: 84–258. Second edition. Austin.
- Bal, M. 1985. *Narratology*. Introduction to the Theory of Narrative. Toronto.
- Bal, M. 1988. *Death and dissymmetry*. The politics of coherence in the Book of Judges. Chicago.
- Bell, Th. 1989. *Bernhardus dixit*. Bernardus van Clairvaux in Martin Luthers Werken. Delft.
- Benson, R.L. and G. Constable (eds.) 1982. *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*. Oxford.
- Bertrand, D. and G. Lobrichon 1992. *Bernard de Clairvaux*. Histoire-Mentalités-Spiritualité. Colloque de Lyon - Dijon - Cîteaux 1990. Paris.
- Boase, R. 1977. *The origin and meaning of Courtly Love*. Manchester.
- Boulez, P. 1975. *Par volonté et par hasard*. Paris.

- Bredero, A.H. 1960. *Etudes sur la Vita prima de saint Bernard*. Rome.
- . 1977. 'Saint Bernard and the Historians'. In: Pennington, M.B. (ed.). *Saint Bernard*. Studies Commemorating the Eighth Century of his Canonization. Kalamazoo.
- . 1980. 'The conflicting Interpretations on the Relevance of Bernard of Clairvaux to the History of his own Time'. *Cîteaux. Commentarii Cistercienses* 31: 53–81.
- . 1985. *Cluny et Cîteaux au XIIe siècle*. L'histoire d'une controverse monastique. Amsterdam-Maarssen-Lille.
- . 1987–8. 'De toegankelijkheid van het historisch leven van Sint Bernard'. *Sacris Erudiri* 30: 293–328.
- . 1993. *Bernardus van Clairvaux tussen cultus en historie*. Kampen.
- Brésard, L. 1983. *Bernard et Origène commentent le Cantique*. Forges.
- Bumke, J. 1986. *Höfische Kultur*. Literatur und Gesellschaft im hohen Mittelalter. 2 vols. München.
- Bynum, C. Walker. 1984. *Jesus as Mother*. Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages. Berkeley.
- Casey, M. 1988. *Athirst for God*. Spiritual Desire in Bernard of Clairvaux's Sermons on the Song of Songs. Kalamazoo. Cistercian Studies Series 77.
- Carruthers, M.J. 1990. *The Book of Memory*. A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture. Cambridge.
- Certeau, M. de. 1963. 'De Saint-Cyran au Jansénisme, conversion et réforme'. *Christus, Cahiers Spirituels* 10: 399–417.
- Charland, Th.-M. 1936. *Artes praedicandi*. Contribution a l'histoire de la rhétorique au moyen âge. Paris-Ottawa.
- Chauvin, B. 1992. 'Le plan bernardin: réalités et problèmes'. In: Bertrand and Lobrichon 1992: 307–49.
- Coleman, J. 1992. *Ancient and Medieval Memories*. Studies in the Reconstruction of the Past. Cambridge.
- Colish, M. 1983. *The Mirror of Language*. Second edition. Lincoln.
- . 1991. "'...QUAE HODIE LOCUM NON HABENT': Scolastic Theologians Reflect on their Authorities'. In: *Proceedings of the PMR Conference* 15: 1–17. Villanova.
- Constable, G. 1982. 'Renewal and Reform in Religious Life: Concept and Realities'. In: Benson and Constable 1982: 37–68.
- Cramer, P.J. 1993. *Baptism and Change in the Early Middle Ages c.200–c.1150*. Cambridge.
- Deroy, J.P.Th. 1963. *Bernardus en Origenes*. Haarlem.
- Diers, M. 1991. *Bernhard von Clairvaux*. Elitäre Frömmigkeit und begnadetes Wirken. Münster. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters. Neue Folge. Band 34.
- Dronke, P. 1968. *Medieval Latin and the Rise of European Love-Lyric*. 2 vols. Oxford.
- . 1970. *Poetic Individuality in the Middle Ages*. New Departures in Poetry 1000–1150. Oxford.
- . 1974. *Fabula*. Explorations into the Uses of Myth in Medieval Platonism. Leiden.
- . 1976. 'Learned Lyric and Popular Ballad in the Early Middle Ages'. *Studi Medievali* 3a Serie XVII: 1–40. Reprinted in Dronke 1984: 176–270.
- . 1979. 'The Song of Songs and Medieval Love-Lyric'. In: Lourdau, W. and D. Verhelst (eds.) 1979. *The Bible and Medieval Culture*, Leuven. Mediaevalia Lovaniensia Series I/Studia 7: 236–62. Reprinted in: Dronke 1984: 209–36.

- . 1982. 'Profane Elements in Literature'. In: Benson and Constable 1982: 569–92.
- . 1984a. *The Medieval Poet and his World*. Rome.
- . 1984b. *Women Writers of the Middle Ages*. A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua (†203) to Marguerite Porete (†1310). Cambridge.
- . (ed.) 1989. *Twelfth Century Philosophy*. Cambridge.
- Duby, G. 1976a. *Le temps des cathédrales*. Paris.
- . 1976b. *Saint Bernard et l'art cistercien*. Paris.
- Dupré, L. 1991. *De symboliek van het Heilige*. Kampen.
- Eco, U. 1965. *L'oeuvre ouverte*. Paris.
- Evans, G.R. 1983. *The Mind of St. Bernard of Clairvaux*. Oxford.
- Feld, F. 1990. *Der Ikonoklasmus des Westens*. Leiden. Studies in the History of Christian Thought 41.
- Fichtenau, H. 1992. *Ketzer und Professoren*. Häresie und Vernunftglaube im Hochmittelalter. München.
- Fontaine, N. 1736. *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de Port-Royal*. Tome I. Utrecht.
- Gage, J. 1973. 'Horatian Reminiscences in Two Twelfth-Century Art Critics'. *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 36: 359–60.
- Gilson, E. 1947. *La théologie mystique de saint Bernard*. Paris.
- Griffin, J. 1980. *Homer on Life and Death*. Oxford.
- Harl, M. 1977. 'Le langage de l'expérience religieuse chez les pères grecs'. *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa* 13: 5–35.
- Hofstadter, D.R. 1979. *Gödel, Escher, Bach: an Eternal Golden Braid*. New York.
- Jaeger, C.S. 1985. *The Origins of Courtliness*. Philadelphia.
- Jong, I.F.J. de. 1987. *Narrators and Focalizers*. The Presentation of the Story in the Iliad. Amsterdam.
- Jones, J. 1983. *Dostoevsky*. Oxford.
- Kidson, P. 1987. 'Panofsky, Sugar and St Denis'. *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 50: 1–17.
- Kingma, E. 1993. *De mooiste onder de vrouwen*. Een onderzoek naar religieuze idealen in twaalfde-eeuwse commentaren op het Hooglied. Hilversum.
- Klibansky, R. 1961. 'Peter Abailard and Bernard of Clairvaux'. *Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 5: 1–27.
- Leclercq, J. 1953. *Etudes sur Saint Bernard et ses écrits*. Analecta sacri ordinis Cisterciensis 9. Rome.
- . 1956. *L'amour des lettres et le désir de dieu*. Initiation aux auteurs monastiques du moyen âge. Paris.
- . 1962. *Recueil d'études sur saint Bernard et ses écrits* I. Rome. *Storia e letteratura* 92.
- . 1969. *Recueil d'études sur saint Bernard et ses écrits* III. Rome. *Storia e letteratura* 114.
- . 1979. *Monks and Love in Twelfth-Century France*. Oxford.
- . 1982. 'The Renewal of Theology'. In: Benson and Constable 1982: 68–87.
- . 1983. *Le mariage vu par les moines au XIII^e siècle*. Paris.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. 1964. *Le cru et le cuit*. Paris.
- Levin, H. 1944. *James Joyce*. A critical Introduction. London.
- Lewis, C.S. 1936. *The Allegory of Love*. A Study in medieval tradition. Oxford.
- Lot-Borodine, M. 1928. 'Sur les origines et les fins du "Service d'amour" provençal'. In: *Mélanges Alfred Jeanroy*. Paris. Reprinted in Lot-Borodine 1961: 71–88.
- . 1961. *De l'amour profane à l'amour sacré*. Paris.
- Lubac, H. de. 1959. *Exégèse médiévale*. Les quatre sens de l'écriture. Première partie. Tome II. Paris.

- Luscombe, D.E. 1969. *The School of Peter Abelard*. The Influence of Abelard's Thought in the Early Scholastic Period. Cambridge.
- . 1988. 'From Paris to the Paraclete: the Correspondence of Abelard and Heloise'. *Proceedings of the British Academy* 74: 247–83.
- Marrou, H.-I. 1958. *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*. Fourth edition. Paris.
- . 1971. *Les troubadours*. Paris.
- Martin, C.M. 1992. *Catullus*. New Haven.
- Martin, J. 1982. 'Classicism and Style in Latin Literature'. In: Benson and Constable 1982: 537–68.
- Matter, E.A. 1990. *The Voice of my Beloved*. The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity. Philadelphia.
- McGinn, B. 1992. *The Presence of God: a History of Western Mysticism*. Vol. 1: The Foundations of Mysticism. London.
- McGuire, B.P. 1991. *The Difficult Saint*. Bernard of Clairvaux and his Tradition. Kalamazoo. Cistercian Studies Series 126.
- Meer, F. van der. 1950. *Keerpunt der Middeleeuwen*. Tussen Cluny en Sens. Utrecht/Brussel.
- . 1965. *Atlas de l'ordre cistercien*. Amsterdam-Brussel.
- Meyvaert, P. 1966. 'Gregory the Great and the Theme of Authority'. *Spode House Review* 3: 3–12. Reprinted in: Meyvaert 1977: V.
- . 1977. *Benedict, Gregory, Bede and Others*. London.
- Mohrmann, Chr. 1957. 'Observations sur la langue et le style de saint Bernard'. In: *Sancti Bernardi opera*. vol. 2: IX–XXXIII.
- Monson, D.A. 1988. 'Andreas Capellanus and the Problem of Irony'. *Speculum* 63: 539–72.
- Moos, von. P. 1971, 1972. *Consolatio*. Studien zur Mittellateinischen Trostliteratur über den Tod und zum Problem der christlichen Trauer. 4 vols. München.
- . 1988. *Geschichte als Topik*. Das rhetorische Exemplum von der Antike zur Neuzeit und die *historiae* im 'Policraticus' Johanns von Salisbury. Hildesheim. Ordo: Studien zur Literatur und Gesellschaft des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit. Band 2.
- Nussbaum, M.C. 1990. *Love's Knowledge*. New York.
- Ohly, F. 1958. *Hoheliedstudien*. Grundzüge einer Geschichte der Hoheliedauslegung des Abendlandes bis um 1200. Wiesbaden.
- Olsen, G.W. 1990. 'Recovering the Homeland: Acts 4:32 and the Ecclesia Primitiva in St. Bernard's Sermons on the Song of Songs'. *Word and Spirit* 12: 92–117.
- Otten, W. 1991. *The Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena*. Leiden. Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 20.
- Panofsky, E. 1979. *Abbot Suger on the Abbey Church of St.-Denis and Its Art Treasures*. Second edition. Princeton.
- Paris, G. 1912. *Mélanges de littérature française du Moyen Age*. (ed. M. Roques). Paris.
- Pranger, M.B. 1984. 'Studium sacrae scripturae. Comparaison entre les méthodes dialectiques et méditatives dans les oeuvres systématiques et dans la première méditation d'Anselme'. In: *Les mutations socio-culturelles au tournant des XIe–XIIe siècles*: 469–90. Paris. Etudes anselmiennes (IVe Session).
- . 1988. 'Anselm's *Brevitas*'. In: Schnaubelt, J.C., T. Losoncy and F. Van Fleteren (eds.). *Anselm Studies II*: 477–58. White Plains. Proceedings of the Fifth International St. Anselm Conference: St. Anselm and St. Augustine-Episcopi ad Saecula.

- . 1989. 'The Virgin Mary and the Complexities of Love-Language in the Works of Bernard of Clairvaux'. *Cîteaux. Commentarii Cistercienses* 40: 112–38.
- Quinn, Ph.L. 1993. 'Abelard on Atonement'. In: Stump, E. (ed.). *Reasoned Faith*: 281–300. Ithaca.
- Roemer, P. 1993. *Pseudo-Dionysius. A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to their Influence*. New York-Oxford.
- Rousseau, O. 1953. 'Le dernier des Pères'. *Bernard Théologien. Analecta Sacri Ordinis Cisterciensis* 9: 306–8.
- Rudolph, C. 1990a. *The "Things of Greater Importance"*. Bernard of Clairvaux's *Apologia* and the Medieval Attitude toward Art. Philadelphia.
- . 1990b. *Artistic Change at St.-Denis*. Abbot Suger's Program and the Early Twelfth-Century Controversy over Art. Princeton.
- Sainte-Beuve. *Port-Royal*. Tome I. Leroy, M. (ed.). 1953. Paris. Bibliothèque de la Pléiade.
- Schmidt, M. 1968. 'Regio dissimilitudinis: Ein Grundbegriff mittel-hochdeutscher Prosa im Lichte seiner lateinischen Bedeutungsgeschichte'. *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 15: 63–108.
- Southern, R.W. 1953. *The Making of the Middle Ages*. London.
- Spence, S. 1988. *Rhetorics of Reason and Desire*. Vergil, Augustine and the Troubadours. Ithaca-London.
- Stock, B. 1983. *The Implications of Literacy*. Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries. Princeton.
- Vacandard, E. 1920. *Vie de Saint Bernard, Abbé de Clairvaux*. Two volumes. Fourth edition. Paris.
- Van Engen, J. 1983. *Rupert of Deutz*. Berkeley-Los Angeles-London.
- Warner, M. 1976. *Alone of all her Sex*. The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary. London.
- Wechsler, E. 1909. *Das Kulturproblem des Minnesangs*. Studien zur Vorgeschichte der Renaissance. Halle a. S.
- Zinn Jr, G.A. 1986a. 'Suger, Theology and the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition'. In: Gerson, P.L. (ed.) *Abbot Suger and Saint-Denis*: 34–40. New York.
- . 1986b. 'Sound, Silence and Word in the Spirituality of Gregory the Great. In: *Grégoire le Grand*: 367–75. Paris. Colloques internationaux du CNRS.